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联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,
Director-General of UNESCO
on the occasion of Human Rights Day**

10 December 2019

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948. However, seventy-one years later, human rights are still an all-too-distant ideal for much of humanity. Rising intolerance, fanaticism and violence are fault lines that run through our societies, threatening peaceful and sustainable coexistence.

When human rights are put at risk, so are the futures of young people. For this reason, young people are speaking up and calling for change. They want a world in which they can write their own story, instead of having it written for them. But to do so, they must overcome structural and institutional barriers, as well as a lack of spaces for participation.

The theme of this year's Human Rights Day is "youth standing up for human rights" – because if we want to build a sustainable world, we need to include young people.

Working with and for young people is one of UNESCO's top priorities. The vision of youth as key partners and actors for development and peace lies at the core of the UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth (2014-2021), which covers all areas of work of the Organization. In partnership with solid youth networks, UNESCO supports youth-led initiatives that drive social innovation and change, promote the concept of global citizenship, and prevent violent extremism.

In defending human rights, education is essential. Since 1953, UNESCO has mobilized schools, encouraging them to join forces and share knowledge and experience. Today, the UNESCO Associated Schools Network brings together more than 11,500 institutions in 182 countries, focusing on two priorities for education in tomorrow's world: global citizenship education, which helps shape awareness of a universal identity, and education for sustainable development.

Tomorrow, young people will take control of our societies and our planet. Tomorrow, they will take up the task of building a fairer and more sustainable world. However, in focusing on the future of these youth, we must not forget that they are entitled to inherit a world in which they can live – live well, and live decently. This is our duty – the duty we have as adults today. As Malala Yousafzai said, “Adults must understand that when young people speak up, they are thinking of their future.”