



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

## **Message from Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, 9 August 2017**

This year, we celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landmark UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. This is an opportunity to honour the rights of indigenous peoples and their unique contribution to achieving mutual understanding, peace and sustainable development. Indigenous peoples are custodians and practitioners of unique cultures and relationships with the natural environment. They embody a wide range of linguistic and cultural diversity at the heart of our shared humanity. Protecting their rights and dignity is protecting everyone's rights and respecting humanity's soul, past and future.

The protection and well-being of indigenous peoples has never been so important. Despite their cultural diversity and homelands across 90 countries, they share common challenges related to the protection of their rights as distinct peoples. 370 million indigenous peoples make up less than 5 per cent of the world's population but account for 15 per cent of the poorest.

In this spirit, UNESCO's latest Global Education Monitoring Report provides concrete guidance and policy advice for the advancement of indigenous peoples' rights'. UNESCO launched the Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) programme in 2002 to support governments in creating synergies between scientific and indigenous peoples' knowledge. This has been furthered through a policy brief on "Indigenous and Local Knowledge(s) and Science(s) for Sustainable Development" issued by The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) of the United Nations Secretary-General. All this inspires UNESCO's ongoing work to develop a Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples to ensure a stronger implementation of the UN Declaration. This will not only be beneficial to indigenous peoples but for all of humanity and our planet. Let us join our efforts and share this message - #weareindigenous !