



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Message from Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of the International Youth Day, 12 August 2017

Youth Building Peace

The world has never been so young and it is getting younger every day. The development of any society depends on how well it nurtures its young women and men, how well they are supported.

In 2015, there were 1.2 billion young people in the world, and more than 600 million lived in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Young people carry the heaviest burdens of conflict and violence -- they are also essential for any lasting solution leading to peace.

We have examples from across the world. Nousha Kabawat teaches conflict resolution skills in refugee camps. Monday Collins is a former child soldier and an inspiring young peacemaker. Nadiehezka Palencia is a young human-rights lawyer working on the Colombian peace process. Each of them is a member of our #YouthofUNESCO community. Each is living proof that young people are already shaping the world for the better -- we need to recognise this and support them.

This is the spirit of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security, to engage and partner with young women and men, and their organizations, in promoting peace and preventing violent extremism. Youth stand at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and UNESCO is working across the board to support them not as beneficiaries but as leaders, playing vital roles at local, national and global levels. This starts with work to create environments to empower young women and men as change-makers in their communities, to strengthen the foundations of dialogue and peace, especially in conflict or violence-affected areas.

On International Youth Day, let us all unite – international actors, governments, civil society and educational institutions -- to partner with young women and men to craft new paths together towards more peaceful societies.