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## Message from

**Ms Irina Bokova,  
Director-General of UNESCO,**

**on the occasion of the World Day for Audiovisual Heritage**

**UNESCO, 27 October 2012**

Our audiovisual heritage is rich and vibrant – it is also extremely fragile. The pace of technological development is making formats and reading devices become obsolescent in less than a decade. The preservation of audiovisual heritage is a complex task that requires costly resources. In response to the rapid deterioration and loss of this heritage, we must redouble our efforts for storage and digitization and strengthen international cooperation – because time is working against us.

To deepen mutual understanding among peoples, UNESCO works to protect and share our universal heritage in all its forms – through documents, traditions, books, works of art as well as historical and cultural monuments. In this new age of diversity, we need ever more intercultural dialogue and ever deeper curiosity about others, in order to denounce cultural or religious stereotypes that are the seedbeds of intolerance. Our audiovisual heritage is vital for these efforts. A vector of identity and memory, it carries the promise of sharing experience and broadening the horizons of everyone. It provides unique insight to humanity's great cultural and scientific diversity. No other medium bears such vibrant testimony to the world's rituals, customs and cultural expressions. Scientific, cultural and educational audiovisual content cross continents on information highways – the new global commons – but, for this, States must effectively safeguard this heritage and disseminate it appropriately.

Through its work in culture and the *Memory of the World* programme, UNESCO supports States in their commitment to protect this heritage. Given the urgency of rapid deterioration, we must accelerate the pace of our work – to train

professionals, to build institutional capacities and to formulate effective public policies. International Days such as this help to raise awareness and to alert public authorities about the extreme fragility of the treasures that are being lost. On this day, I call on all public authorities and all professionals to take a stand to ensure this outstanding heritage is preserved and shared.

Irina Bokova