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## UN marks World Philosophy Day with call for greater use of reason and dialogue



18 November 2010 – The United Nations marked [World Philosophy Day](#) today with a call for greater efforts to guard against the politics of polarization and the rejection of stereotypes, ignorance and hatred.

“Let us instead fortify our societies through reason and dialogue – the lifeblood of philosophical debate,” said [Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon](#), in a video message for an event marking the Day at the Paris headquarters of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)). “And let us recognize the critical role that the age-old tradition of philosophy can play in our modern, interconnected world.”

World Philosophy Day is celebrated every third Thursday of November since 2002, with the aim of making philosophical reflection accessible to all – professors and students, scholars and the general public – thereby enlarging the opportunities and spaces for the stimulation of critical thinking and debate.

“Philosophy deals routinely in universals – in broadly shared questions about human existence, beliefs and behaviour. That gives it uncommon power to help build bridges between people, and to open channels of communication among cultures,” Mr. Ban said.

“So let us use this essential expression of the human mind to change the minds of men and women – for that is where, as UNESCO’s own Charter so memorably states, true peace begins.”

Celebrations to mark the Day were organized by academics in more than 80 countries, in all regions of the world. A special event was held at UNESCO Headquarters, interweaving philosophy, cultural diversity and the rapprochement of cultures – with the latter tying in to the 2010 celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures.

Since its creation, UNESCO has used philosophy to implement the ideals that inspired its Constitution; these ideals stem from philosophical tradition.

UNESCO's Director-General, Irina Bokova, inaugurated the Paris event, which included an international forum on the topic "Philosophy, Cultural Diversity and Rapprochement of Cultures," with the participation of internationally-renowned philosophers and eminent figures, in addition to a series of symposia and round-table discussions.

"Philosophy actually teaches diversity lessons through its numerous schools of thought in all eras and on all continents," Ms. Bokova said in her [message](#) for the Day. "In view of the intricacies of current issues, we should tap into that wealth in order to build our capacity to analyse reality."

She also called for intensified efforts to provide everyone with quality education and an enabling environment in which every man and woman can express his or her ideas and enrich public debate in furtherance of justice and peace.

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