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Tragedy of slavery should give rise to respect of cultural diversity – UN



Leaflet of the Year

23 August 2010 – Marking the day dedicated to the remembrance of the tragedy of the slave trade and the abolition of servitude, the head of the United Nations agency tasked conserving the world's cultural heritage today urged mankind to promote the beneficial effects of cultural diversity.

"In this International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, remembrance of the slave trade and slavery, one of the worst tragedies in the history of humanity, prompts us to reflect on possible ways of alleviating and overcoming such painful memories," Irina Bokova, the Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), said in a [message](#) to mark the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition.

Since it was established in 1998, the International Day has been used as an opportunity to pay tribute to the struggle led by the slaves themselves to recover their dignity and freedom. An uprising on the island of Santo Domingo on the night of 22-23 August 1791 led to Haiti's independence – the first victory of slaves over their oppressors.

This revolution had worldwide repercussions and a considerable impact on liberation struggles in the Latin American and Caribbean countries, some of which are celebrating the bicentenary of their independence this year.

"I invite all UNESCO's partners, including national authorities, international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society, to provide opportunities for exchange and reflection that place emphasis on the beneficial effects of cultural diversity, recognizing the importance of the continuous transfers and exchanges among cultures and the links established since time immemorial," said Ms. Bokova.

In 1994, UNESCO launched the Slave Route Project, which has given the organization significant experience and expertise to contribute to the critical reflection on ways of securing reconciliation and rapprochement among peoples through the shared legacy of the tragedy of slavery.

On the basis of the new strategy defined for the project, UNESCO will continue to implement innovative activities, information and awareness-raising campaigns to disseminate and ensure recognition of historical facts, and the cultural interaction arising from the slave trade and slavery.

To ensure the vitality and sustainability of the project, new themes are being examined to study the issue of slavery in greater depth.

The new themes include Africa's presence in the world; the psychological consequences of the slave trade and slavery; the transfer of knowledge and skills from Africa to the rest of the world; tourism for remembrance; and cultural and creative industries arising from the tragedy.

According to UNESCO, the challenge of "living together" in our multicultural societies implies recognition of each person's history and memory, and the sharing of a common heritage to transcend past tragedies.

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