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Organización
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Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,

Director-General of UNESCO,

on the occasion of

World Book and Copyright Day

23 April 2018

On 23 April 1616, two giants of world literature died, two precursors whose work would revolutionize the way fiction was conceived and written: Cervantes and Shakespeare. This coincidence is why 16 April was chosen to be World Book and Copyright Day.

When we celebrate books, we celebrate activities – writing, reading, translating, publishing – which help individuals to raise and fulfil themselves; and we celebrate, in a fundamental way, the freedoms that make them possible. Books are at the intersection of some of the most essential human freedoms, primarily freedom of expression and freedom to publish. These are fragile freedoms. Faced by many challenges, from the questioning of copyright and cultural diversity to the physical threats looming over authors, journalists and publishers in many countries, these freedoms are also denied, even today, when schools are attacked, and manuscripts and books destroyed.

It is our duty then, everywhere in the world, to protect these freedoms and to promote reading and writing in order to fight illiteracy and poverty and to strengthen the foundations of peace, as well as to protect the publishing-related professions and professionals.

UNESCO, in partnership with the International Publishers Association (IPA) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), supports, for instance, the action of publishers, which deserves due recognition and protection, since the movement of written works is an essential contribution to freedom of expression, public debate and dialogue. It was with this in mind that the IPA

established its Prix Voltaire, which every year honours the courage of publishers who refuse to stay silent and who enable authors to exercise their freedom of expression.

Athens was designated World Book Capital 2018 in recognition of the quality of its programmes to support the publishing sector, which have facilitated access to books for the population as a whole, and for migrants and refugees in particular.

With Athens and the entire international community, let us join together to celebrate books, which embody creativity, enable ideas and knowledge to be shared across borders, and strengthen mutual understanding and dialogue.

Audrey Azoulay