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Message from Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

**on the occasion of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against
Journalists**

2 November 2016

Impunity breeds impunity. This is injustice for all.

Since 2006, UNESCO has condemned the killing of more than 800 journalists. Less than 7% of these crimes committed have been solved.

In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. wrote: *"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly."*

Impunity is a crime against the exercise of freedom of expression and human rights more broadly. It emboldens the perpetrators of crimes, it threatens the rule of law, and it leads to fear and self-censorship. All society suffers.

Today, we need a new commitment by all to create a free and safe environment for journalists. We need new mobilization to implement the *UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity*, spearheaded by UNESCO. More than ever, we must do everything to protect journalists and fight against impunity. This is vital for implementing Sustainable Development Goal 16.10, to ensure public access to information and to protect fundamental freedoms.

We must accelerate the pace. The United Nations has adopted several landmark resolutions to promote the safety of journalists and to end impunity for attacks against them. Across the world, UNESCO is building the capacity of judiciaries and security forces on safety issues and the rule of law, working with Governments, NGOs,

professional associations and journalists. More and more Governments are integrating international standards on the safety of journalists in national and media legislation.

We must all do more.

On this *International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists*, I call on all Member States to do everything to bring perpetrators to justice, by developing and strengthening laws and mechanisms in accordance with the international humanitarian law and existing UN resolutions.

I urge media, civil society, the police and judiciary to deepen efforts to prevent violence against journalists, to enhance the protection of journalists in danger, and to prosecute perpetrators of attacks.

I encourage everyone to stand with UNESCO in condemning every fatal attack against a journalist, in calling for full investigation of such crimes, in demanding appropriate punishment for those committing these violations.

We must all redouble efforts to raise awareness about the importance of freedom of expression, which includes the right to expression without fear of violent retaliation.

This is UNESCO's message on this *International Day to End Impunity for crimes against Journalists*.

Irina Bokova