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**Address by Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO
on the occasion of her visit to Kadir Has University**

“Safeguarding the Past for a Better Future for All”

Kadir Has University, Istanbul 7 January 2015

Professor Mustafa Aydin, Rector of Kadir Has University,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Professors and Students,

Thank you for this invitation.

I am honoured to be here to launch the new *UNESCO Chair on Management and Promotion of World Heritage Sites* and to have this opportunity to speak before the staff and students of Kadir Has University.

I must say the mission statement of this University is deeply inspiring -- *to produce students who are self-confident, who*

question, who consider all perspectives and evaluate them without prejudice, and who are open to the winds of change.

I think this captures eloquently the ethical mission of higher education today – to nurture young minds, to give young women and men skills to meet the tests of their times.

These are, indeed, testing times.

I believe we are living today in a new age of diversity and a new age of limits.

An age of diversity -- in terms of cultures, identities, approaches to peace and development.

An age of limits -- in terms of material resources, in terms of boundaries of our planet.

Turkey knows well the challenges of conflict, in the consequences of extremism and violence raging in Iraq and Syria today, and we see the robust leadership of Turkey in supporting some 1.6 million refugees.

These are times of great change, turbulence and turmoil.

Our societies and cities are becoming ever more diverse, but intolerance is on the rise.

In this new setting, it is more important than ever to nurture common values, to bring people together around common projects — around the cultural heritage of humanity, around dignity and rights, around a common vision of the future.

This is the message UNESCO has been taking forward for 70 years, and I believe it has never been so important.

Peace cannot be decreed through treaties alone -- it must be nurtured through the dignity, rights and capacities of every man and woman.

From this angle, we see clearly where peace is failing today.

It is failing in societies riven by poverty, inequalities and unemployment.

It is failing in violent extremism, fuelled by intolerance.

It is failing in hatred spread through new media.

It is failing in attacks against humanity's cultural heritage and diversity.

Last November, I travelled to Iraq, to Baghdad and Erbil, to stand with the Iraqi Government and people against the outrages they are suffering.

Along with a deep humanitarian crisis, we see unprecedented cultural cleansing, cultural eradication and cultural looting.

We see the intentional destruction of irreplaceable landmarks.

We see communities attacked on the basis of their identities.

We see the looting of ancient sites for illicit trafficking, to finance extremist groups.

These are attacks against the identities of the people of Iraq.

I went to Iraq to call for national dialogue across all cultural and religious lines, to say that this cultural heritage and diversity must be defended, to say that saving the past of Iraq is essential to saving the future of the country and to our collective history and future.

This stands for Iraq – it stands also for Syria, and it stands for Mali, where UNESCO is rebuilding the mausoleums of Timbuktu.

Saving the past – safeguarding cultural heritage and diversity – is essential for reconciliation and peacebuilding today and tomorrow – this is UNESCO's message.

I sent the same message three weeks ago in the Central African Republic, speaking with the Interim President, Ms Catherine Samba-Panza, who recalled the vandalism that destroyed the National Museum in Bangui, established by UNESCO:

“Everything was lost in terms of culture,” she said. “Our relationship with the past must be rebuilt.”

UNESCO is working with the Government and people of the Central Africa Republic in its peacebuilding efforts.

Across the world, UNESCO is acting to promote culture as a dynamic force that enlarges opportunities and renews societies.

At a time when all societies are under pressure, culture is a wellspring for belonging and energy that is endlessly renewable.

The same spirit underpins the *United Nations Alliance of Civilizations* initiative, co-founded by Turkey, whose annual fora I have attended, starting with Istanbul in 2009 to the most recent Annual Forum in Indonesia – the Bali Forum was held back-to-back with the *UNESCO Global Media Forum*, which explored the role of media in advancing intercultural dialogue.

I was honoured to launch the *2011 Series of Alliance of Civilizations Conferences* in Istanbul, at the Dolmabahçe Palace.

UNESCO and the Alliance of Civilizations have forged a powerful, mutually-reinforcing partnership -- with the Alliance of Civilizations catalysing political attention and UNESCO bringing rich experience in promoting cultural diversity, safeguarding cultural heritage and fostering the dialogue of cultures.

Building on a wide-ranging Memorandum of Understanding, I am determined to deepen the partnership with the Alliance of Civilizations -- namely, to strengthen the role of youth and media in advancing cultural literacy and intercultural dialogue.

I am determined to bring all of UNESCO's experience over 70 years, to deepen mutual understanding and build new bridges of dialogue, working with the Alliance of Civilizations.

UNESCO is deeply committed to safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage – especially in situations of conflict, when culture stands on the frontline and is attacked precisely to prevent peace...

UNESCO's role is to raise the alarm, to bring all partners together, to strengthen joint action.

This is why I have launched *Emergency Response Action Plans* for Iraq and Syria, working with all partners, especially neighbouring countries – Turkey is playing an essential role here, especially in ensuring higher vigilance in the fight against the trafficking of cultural goods.

We must do more, working with all relevant actors, including the private sector, civil society.

I believe we must create “protected cultural zones” around heritage sites, through stronger engagement with local actors.

I have called on the UN Security Council to consider an international ban on trade in Syrian cultural objects.

I call on all to immediately stop all military use and targeting of cultural sites, and I urge all actors to integrate the protection of heritage and cultural diversity into humanitarian operations and peacebuilding efforts, to change mentalities and strengthen action.

This is what we are seeking in Mali, which I visited with President Hollande of France, to rebuild mausoleums, to restore and protect unique manuscripts.

We must harness the power of culture as a force to build trust and dialogue – this is our response to extremism.

These ideas guide all of UNESCO's work, and they stand at the heart of the 1972 World Heritage Convention.

I wish to congratulate the Government and people of Turkey for the inscription last year of the *Pergamon and its Multi-Layered Cultural Landscape*, as well as *Bursa and Cumalıkızık, reflecting the Birth of the Ottoman Empire*, on the UNESCO World Heritage List – I was honoured to present the certificates for these inscriptions yesterday, in the presence of His Excellency Mr Ömer Çelik, Minister of Culture and Tourism.

From the Historic Areas of Istanbul, the Selimiye Mosque to the Rock Sites of Cappadocia... each of these sites has special meaning for the people of this country ... each is also part of the wider history of humanity.

This is the importance of this new *UNESCO Chair on Management and Promotion of World Heritage Sites* – to develop innovative ways for community involvement in the sustainable management of sites and to enhance the capacities of management staff.

This is the 4th UNESCO Chair in Turkey and the first one in this field.

This provides a timely platform to rethink how we view and manage culture, to adapt our tools to new tests.

The way we must manage cultural sites has changed dramatically over the last decades.

Today, we must protect sites against violence and conflict.

We must mitigate the threats of climate change.

We must make the most of transboundary projects.

Cultural sites provide an open book on the management of diversity, carrying lessons of positive globalization.

All of this calls for new skills and approaches, and I can think of no better place than Turkey to take this forward.

Founded in 1997, Kadir Has University has become today a global institution for cutting-edge teaching and research.

I see this new Chair as a reflection of Turkey's commitment to safeguarding its heritage, to sharing best practices in management, and to our long cooperation in this area – and this is also why I am here, to renew the partnership between UNESCO and Turkey, which has never been so important.

I always say inscribing a site on the World Heritage List is just the beginning – all the hard work follows, in its safeguarding and management.

This is essence of the World Heritage Convention and its credibility.

Let me highlight here the model management of the Neolithic Site of Çatalhöyük.

Let me also refer to UNESCO's new online manual -- *Managing Cultural World Heritage* – which provides guidance to States Parties and those involved with World Heritage cultural properties.

We must draw on all sources of knowledge and all new technologies, including new media, to raise awareness, to monitor sites.

I see the digital shift in heritage management as a great opportunity, and I look forward to working with this new UNESCO Chair to explore all its possibilities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to be here, because we share a common conviction.

The conviction that heritage is a force to strengthen the bonds of a single humanity, to counter the forces of fragmentation, to build on a shared past in order to forge a better future for all.

No society can flourish without culture.

No development can be sustainable without it.

With Turkey, this is the message UNESCO is bringing to shape the new post-2015 agenda, with cultural heritage and diversity at its heart.

I thank Kadir Has University for joining us in taking this vision forward.

Thank you.