

**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of International Day of Conscience**

5 April 2023

Today we celebrate the International Day of Conscience, the universal faculty which gives the individual a sense of his/her actions and of the actions of others, allowing him/her to make an ethical judgment about these actions.

This international day is about the very foundations of UNESCO, its *raison d'être*: the promotion of peace. In these uncertain times, its message is one which we need more than ever.

For it is when the universality of consciousness is questioned and one ignores one's own judgment, or when that judgment is repressed in others, that peace weakens and breaks down. Indeed, this is why the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that all human beings are endowed with conscience and are free to act according to it.

By promoting the mutual understanding of peoples through the diversity of cultures and heritage – an understanding through which we all recognize one another as conscientious and worthy beings – and by supporting education and the dissemination of ideas and information, UNESCO helps to guarantee this individual moral sense.

Perhaps more fundamentally, however, the mission of our Organization is also to bring about a collective conscience in humanity – the “intellectual and moral solidarity” cited in the Constitution of UNESCO.

This is the goal of everything we do to support education, culture, information and science.

This is of course the purpose of the programmes through which we fight all forms of racism and discrimination and promote inclusion everywhere, based on respect for diversity. Through these programmes we strive to make everyone aware that we are all part of the same human family.

UNESCO's efforts are also aimed at raising environmental awareness, an understanding of the urgency of rethinking our relationship with the living world. With this in mind, UNESCO is committed to ensure that all its Member States will make environmental education a more significant part of their school curricula by 2025. Such was the spirit of Husserl's “consciousness”: a capacity to ask ourselves about the relationship between the individual and the world.

Similarly, UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence emphasizes the need to combine conscience and vigilance when developing new technologies, thereby echoing Rabelais' caution that “science without conscience is but ruination of the soul”.

It is with confidence, therefore, that on this International Day of Conscience, UNESCO assumes its role as “the conscience of the world community”, as put by Jawaharlal Nehru.