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Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

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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 the International Day of Light**

16 May 2021

On the International Day of Light, we celebrate the inescapable fact of light.

At once a measure of time, a fundamental particle and an electromagnetic wave, light speaks to us about the universe. As scientists learn to unlock its secrets and discover what it can teach us, entire swathes of our understanding of the world open up - and the limits of the knowable are pushed back.

This is also undoubtedly why light is indissociable from human creativity. From the decorated caves of the Palaeolithic to the contemporary works of visual artists, sculptors, photographers, architects, film directors and lighting directors: all are examples of how different creative endeavours, each in their own way, give it concrete expression and celebrate it.

Scientists and engineers have also learned to harness its remarkable properties in practical ways: from light-emitting diodes (LEDs) which spare us from having to stumble around in the dark to broadband Internet, and including myriad applications in medicine, agriculture, energy, optics and any number of other fields, light is everywhere - if you know where to look.

Light is even at the very core of matter, as shown by projects like the International Centre for Synchrotron Light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East (SESAME), a particle accelerator which was inaugurated on 16 May 2017, and which allows teams from throughout the Middle East to uncover mysteries with light.

This day is thus an opportunity to celebrate the power of science and to pay tribute not only to the scientists who practice it, but also to all those who decipher and

disseminate it - teachers and educators, enthusiasts, and ordinary people with inquiring minds.

Indeed, these recent months have emphasized the importance of their role in spreading general scientific literacy and building trust in science.

Trust remains a fundamental condition for science to serve the public interest. This is also the reason why this edition of the International Day of Light is focused on this crucial theme. The situation surrounding vaccines is a striking illustration of this. Without trust and without transparency, scientific progress, however necessary and exceptional, is regarded with suspicion and mistrust and becomes the target of rumour-mongers.

However, such trust is not a given; it must be earned by opening up science to society, by making it clear and understandable, and by not omitting it from democratic debate under the pretext of its technical nature. This is the only way in which science can fulfil the entirety of its potential. This is why scientists from around the world, including Nobel Prize laureates and winners of the L'ORÉAL-UNESCO Prize "For Women in Science", have committed to shoring up trust in science through a major campaign which is being launched this International Day of Light.

This year, may this day, marked once again by the pandemic and its consequences, be an opportunity to celebrate not only science, but also all those who, by making it accessible, by discussing it and by questioning its limits, help to ensure that it is genuinely a common good for all humanity.