

## Speech by Irina Bokova

UNESCO was the first United Nations agency to co-organize an exhibition on the relationship between the Jewish people and the Holy Land, reaffirming the Organization's role as a universal platform for intellectual cooperation and intercultural dialogue.

This exhibition is an invitation to discover the history of the Jewish people in the Holy Land of the three monotheistic religions, Land of all "the sons of Abraham, a mosaic of cultures and peoples, whose history has shaped all humanity."

Jewish culture has given to the world some of its most universal figures, as you can see on these panels - from Abraham to Einstein, from David to Spinoza, it has contributed to the advancement of all humanity and to the dialogue among cultures, in a continual process of mutual enrichment...

This idea resonates with the core values of UNESCO, founded on the conviction that mutual understanding and the moral solidarity of peoples are the only sustainable answer to racism and antisemitism.

This is why UNESCO advances the teaching of history, the sharing of knowledge, and the promotion of all cultures, including Jewish culture.

I refer here to the safeguarding of the millennial sites of Masada and Beersheba, as well as to the modern architecture of Tel Aviv - tributes to Jewish history, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list, which is a unique tool of international cooperation.

I am thinking also of Israeli know-how in water management and irrigation, which UNESCO shares with other Member States, and of the talent of scientists like Ada Yonath, UNESCO/L'Oreal Laureate and Nobel Prize Winner, who is a member of the Scientific Advisory Board created by UNESCO... of our cooperation for gender equality with the Golda Meir Mount Carmel Centre and also with the Weizmann Institute of Science, and of UNESCO's SESAME scientific project in the Middle East - these are just a few examples of the influence of Israeli expertise and of Jewish culture within and throughout UNESCO.

I am concerned by the rise of antisemitism, particularly in Europe, by violence against men, women, children, who are attacked and killed because they are Jewish. I am concerned because these acts of violence are not isolated, they are not the work of 'lone wolves' - they draw on a social climate and discourse that endorses racism as normal along with hatred towards Jews...

We categorically condemn and reject all hate speech. We do so through human rights education, and especially our global programme on Holocaust education, which is unique within the United Nations, and which provides means to prevent violence and to combat Holocaust denial and antisemitism today.

Our role is also to identify and to denounce antisemitism in all of its forms, including contemporary ones, even the most insidious, because hatred towards Jews can take many guises - economic, racial, social, religious and others - which must be identified and combated...

Irina Bokova

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*Speech at the Paris opening*