

January 31, 2012

Friends and Colleagues,

Happy New Year! 2012 is shaping up to be a very exciting and busy year for the Bureau of International Organization Affairs. Earlier this month I was pleased to travel to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Headquarters in Paris for the launch of the “[Teaching Respect for All](#)” (TRA) initiative, another excellent example of multilateral engagement.

TRA is a joint initiative between the United States, UNESCO and the Government of Brazil to develop a middle school curriculum and online platform for teachers to use in classrooms across the globe to promote tolerance and respect for all people. Prior to the launch, I filmed a video asking students from around the world to send me their thoughts on respect through Twitter by using the hashtag **#Dignity4All**. This effort resulted in reaching a whopping 3.6 million Twitter users from around the globe. The initiative was first announced as an outcome of President Obama’s March 2011 visit to Brazil where both President Obama and President Rousseff of Brazil reaffirmed their commitment to cooperation under the U.S.-Brazil Joint Action Plan to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality.

In Paris, I joined UNESCO’s Director General Irina Bokova and Mario Lisboa Theodoro from Brazil’s Secretariat on Policies of Promotion of Racial Equality to participate in a video conference with students from the United States and Brazil. In this conference, we were able to openly discuss issues of tolerance and racism. I was encouraged by the thoughtfulness and enthusiasm demonstrated by students from Tallwood High School in



With Director General of UNESCO Irina Bokova, and U.S. Permanent Representative to UNESCO David Killion at UNESCO headquarters in Paris for the launch of the Teaching Respect for All Initiative.

Virginia Beach, VA and Bagunçação Youth Centre in Salvador, Brazil in our discussion. Also during the TRA launch, UNESCO and State Department officials participated in a webchat with students from around the globe to share their thoughts on respect and how to utilize the classroom in combating intolerance. I look forward to continue to promote the TRA initiative in the months ahead.

As we work towards building a more respectful world, it is important for us to learn from the past. This January 27<sup>th</sup> marked the 67<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and is recognized in the international community as International Holocaust Remembrance Day. I participated in a candle lighting ceremony at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. as this is a day every UN member state has an obligation to remember the atrocities of the Holocaust and further develop education programs to prevent future genocides. I was quite pleased that at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, American Dr. Samuel Pizar a Polish-born Holocaust survivor and acclaimed international lawyer, author and human rights activist, was designated a UNESCO Honorary Ambassador and Special Envoy for Holocaust Education. The United States is a major supporter of Holocaust education and we are pleased to have a distinguished American in this very important role.

Lastly, 2012 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. In 1972, the United States helped to create the convention, which today is considered one of the world community's most valuable and universally esteemed agreements.

On this anniversary, the United States celebrates not just the Convention's origins and originators, but also the important accomplishments subsequently made under its provisions, most importantly the creation of World Heritage Sites around the globe, including the twenty-one [World Heritage Sites](#) found in the United States.

This January 30<sup>th</sup> in Paris, UNESCO launched the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary's celebration with a concert featuring UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Herbie Hancock. The State Department in close collaboration with the National Park Service is also planning a number of events throughout the United States to celebrate the 40 years of the World Heritage Convention.

And on a final note, January at the Department of State has been deemed 21st Century Statecraft Month and as such I would like to encourage you to keep up with the U.S. government's multilateral engagement through our [Tumblr](#) on Tumblr or follow us on Twitter at [@State IO](#).

Warmest regards,

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