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Message from Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

on the occasion of the exhibition *The Roerich Pact: Past and Present*

Paris, 2 April 2012

I am pleased that UNESCO is hosting this exhibition on *The Roerich Pact: Past and Present*. This event coincides with the 80th anniversary of the 2nd International Conference on the Roerich Pact that was held in Bruges and that proved so decisive for its development and enforcement.

This exhibition pays tribute to a great Russian luminary, who had multiple skills and talents. Nicholas Roerich left an impact through his art but also through his determined belief in the need to protect the world's cultural heritage. The exhibition pays tribute to the power of this idea.

Most importantly, he brought this idea to fruition. Roerich initiated the drafting of the *Treaty on the Protection of Artistic and Scientific Institutions and Historic Monuments*, commonly known as the Roerich Pact, which was signed in 1935. The Pact embodies the painstaking efforts of people and organizations across the world to protect cultural heritage. The tenets of the Pact have long provided inspiration to UNESCO's commitment and action to safeguard all forms of heritage and the world's cultural diversity.

The Roerich Pact has paved the way also for several of UNESCO's landmark international legal instruments devoted to the protection of cultural property both in peacetime and during war -- including the 1954 *Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* and its two (1954 and 1999) Protocols.

UNESCO is delighted to cooperate with institutions involved in the protection of cultural heritage, such as the International Centre of the Roerichs. I wish to thank the Centre for organizing this enlightening exhibition, featuring documents

illustrating the Pact's history and global reach as well as paintings by Nicholas Roerich. I am grateful also to the Permanent Delegations of the Russian Federation and India to UNESCO for supporting this important initiative.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Irina Bokova". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Irina Bokova