

**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of World Book and Copyright Day**

23 April 2024

Books are invitations to travel and to encountering others: with each new page turned, another world appears before our eyes. On World Book and Copyright Day 2024, we wish to celebrate the power and beauty of books.

Books, in all their forms, allow us to learn and to keep ourselves informed. They also entertain us and help us to understand the world, while offering a window into otherness.

For books to be able to unleash their full potential, it is essential that they reflect the linguistic diversity of our world. However, this is far from being the case today; the majority of works are published in just a handful of languages, and digital technology raises the issue of linguistic homogenization.

Yet every written language brings with it a particular worldview, with its symbols and its values.

That is why, as part of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL), launched in 2022, UNESCO is supporting the publication of books in both Indigenous and regional languages. Since 2023, we have been working with publishing houses around the world to publish *What Makes Us Human*, by Victor D.O. Santos and Anna Forlati – an illustrated children’s book which celebrates linguistic and cultural richness - in 14 languages, including Mapuche, Galician and Marathi.

UNESCO also supports the book industry in Africa, particularly the sector devoted to books for young people. To help recount the history of slavery and discuss its reverberations in today’s world, in 2022 we launched the “Bintou & Issa” series in partnership with publishing house Langages du Sud. The goal of the series is to make children aware of the subject from an early age. Also in partnership with Langages du Sud, and on the occasion of the International Publishing and Book Fair in Rabat in May 2024, we will be launching the first volume of the *Les Balades de Nour* series. The book invites young Moroccans to learn about their UNESCO-listed cultural heritage from a different perspective.

Finally, UNESCO supports the publishing sector and the power of reading through its network of World Book Capitals, designed to reinforce literacy education and promote the protection of copyright and freedom of expression. Strasbourg, France, has been designated the World Book Capital of 2024. The objective is to make books the preferred medium for both communicating the environmental concerns of our time and sharing the associated scientific knowledge.

Finally, we are committed to supporting the fair remuneration of all those involved in the book industry, beginning with the authors. After all, behind every book there is an entire chain of know-how and skills which has led to its creation.

On this day, UNESCO invites you not only to celebrate reading and culture, but also to make a commitment to their support.