

Message from Ms Mariya Gabriel, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, UNESCO

Launch of “The Bell Chime Resounds for Peace” – 21 September 2026

On the International Day of Peace, it is a pleasure to convey UNESCO’s support for *“The Bell Chime Resounds for Peace,”* an initiative that places children and young people, their creativity and their voices, at the heart of a culture of peace.

I warmly commend the Peace Bells Foundation, as well as the schools, cultural institutions, municipalities, families and communities across Bulgaria taking part in this inspiring collective effort.

At UNESCO, peace is at the very heart of our mission.

Our Constitution reminds us that, since wars began in the minds of women and men, it is in the minds of women and men that the defences of peace must be constructed.

Peace therefore is built not only through political agreements, but also through education, culture, dialogue, mutual understanding, respect for human dignity and solidarity.

This is why it matters so much to give children a voice.

Through drawing, music, theatre, literature and other forms of art, children across Bulgaria and beyond are expressing what peace means to them.

They are showing us that peace is not an abstract idea.

It is something we learn, practice and choose in our everyday relationships and actions.

The message of this initiative captures this beautifully *“Peace is My Choice. Peace is Our Choice”*.

It is a message that resonates strongly in today’s interconnected world.

Digital technologies offer extraordinary opportunities for young people to learn, create, participate and connect.

But they can also expose them to misinformation, hate speech, discrimination and narratives that deepen divisions.

This is why UNESCO works to promote freedom of expression, access to information, intercultural dialogue and Media and information Literacy.

We want people, especially young people, to have the knowledge and critical skills to navigate information, engage respectfully with others and participate confidently in society.

The values underpinning these efforts resonate strongly with this initiative.

By placing children's self-expression, participation and voices at its centre, "The Bell Chime Resounds for Peace" reminds us that a culture of peace is nurtured through dialogue, understanding and engagement with others.

Because a culture of peace is not simply the absence of conflict.

It is the ability to live with differences, defend human rights, listen to one another and resolve disagreements through dialogue rather than intolerance or violence.

As bells ring across Bulgaria on 21 September, in symbolic harmony with the Peace Bell at the United Nations Headquarters, may their sound carry a powerful message: peace is a shared responsibility, and everyone has a role to play.

Above all, may it remind us that the voices and ideas of children are not only a source of hope for the future. They are part of how we build that future.

May the hopes of the children resonate far beyond this day inspiring dialogue, understanding and peace for generations to come.