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**Message by Mr Pérez de Armiñán,
UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Culture
on the occasion of International Dance Day 2015**

Shanghai (China), 29 April 2015

I am delighted to extend my warm greetings to the participants of the celebration organized in Shanghai by the International Theatre Institute (ITI) to mark the 2015 edition of International Dance Day.

Since its creation in 1948, ITI has remained a valued partner of UNESCO. As the world's leading performing arts organization, ITI supports UNESCO's efforts to promote the diversity of cultural expressions worldwide.

As you know, International Dance Day was founded in 1982 by ITI's Dance Committee with the aim of encouraging all dancers, whether professional or amateur, to share their passion and creativity with the world. We commend ITI for pursuing its mission to inspire new talents, and promote international exchange in the field of performing arts. Moreover I would like to take this opportunity to wish ITI continued success in its new headquarters in Shanghai.

In addition to its immense therapeutic and creative value, dance – in its diverse forms – is an excellent vehicle for strengthening social ties and generating exchange and dialogue. Dance is accessible to all; it gives shape to our aspirations and need for self-expression. In turbulent times such as ours, dance and other performing arts can also provide joy and reinforce our sense of identity and belonging. On this International Dance Day, let us celebrate the universality of this age-old creative expression, and embrace its tremendous unifying force.

On the occasion of this celebration in Shanghai, UNESCO extends its congratulations to the Shanghai Theatre Academy and the Shanghai Municipality for co-hosting this event with ITI. Today is also an opportunity to highlight China's long and illustrious dance traditions, and recognize the contribution of figures such

as Dai Ailian, the distinguished Chinese dancer and educator who empowered and promoted a new generation of talented dance professionals in China.

To all those around the world who appreciate the beauty and power of dance, I wish a very happy International Dance Day.