

Irina Bokova, born in Sofia (Bulgaria), has been two terms the Director-General of UNESCO from 2009 to 2017.

Having graduated from Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Irina Bokova was a Fellow at the University of Maryland, Washington, and followed an executive program at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

As Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova was actively engaged in the adoption of UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, particularly Goal 4 on inclusive and quality education, promoting the role of culture and the protection of the world's cultural heritage, as well as advocating for the critical role of science for sustainable development.

She was particularly active in promoting intercultural dialogue, mutual respect and cultural diversity, defending cultural heritage in conflict in Mali, Syria and Iraq and in denouncing extremists' destruction of heritage as a tool of war, which led to the adoption by the UN Security Council of several landmark resolutions on the link between maintaining peace, security and the protection of cultural heritage, most notably Resolution 2347 of March 2015.

She has received state distinctions from more than 40 countries and is Doctor honoris causa of leading universities across the world, such as King's College and University of Edinburgh, UK, University of Geneva, Switzerland, Paris-Saclay, France, Boston University, US, Catholic University of Milan, Italy, Tongji University, China, Kyung-Hee University, Republic of Korea, among others.

In 2016 Irina Bokova received the World Wildlife Fund's Duke of Edinburgh Conservation award for her contribution to environmental conservation and climate action and advancing sustainable development.

In 2016 she was on the Forbes list of the most influential women.

In 2020, she was elected International Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and in 2021 - Honorary Fellow of the World Academy of Arts and Sciences (WAAS).

In 2022 she was elected Patron of the International Science Council (ISC).

Currently, she is Chair of the Governing Council of the UN University of Peace, Costa Rica, Member of the Board of "Ban Ki Moon Centre for Global Citizens", Member of the Leadership Council of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), New York, Chair of the Board of Democracy and Culture Foundation, London, Co-Founder of Global

Women Leaders (GLW), Madrid, lecturer on cultural diplomacy and sustainability, Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA) at SciencesPo, Member of the International Advisory Council of ALIPH, Geneva, Member of the of the Royal Commission of AlUla , Saudi Arabia, among other activities.