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Организация
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联合国教育、
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**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,
Director-General of UNESCO
on the occasion of World Logic Day**

14 January 2020

In his novel *Nouvelles nourritures*, André Gide said that “the fear of stumbling makes the mind hold tightly onto the handrail of logic”. This brief metaphorical statement sums up logic’s crucial role in the development of human thought.

Logic is the essence of *logos*, a Greek term which means, variously, “speech”, “language” and “reasoning”. It is thus, to use Kant’s definition, a science which meticulously sets out and rigorously demonstrates the formal rules of all thought.

We can see it in the treatises of Aristotle, Euclid, Leibniz and Spinoza; it is evident in the founding texts of Mohist philosophy in China and of the Nyaya school in India: the study of logic has interested countless philosophers and mathematicians throughout the centuries.

It is because of its multiple practical applications – perhaps especially because of them – that logic has been studied so extensively. To be sure, logic has been a key element in the development of science and engineering, cognitive psychology, linguistics and communication. A wellspring of innovation, logic has always been a veritable catalyst for change.

In the twenty-first century – indeed, now more than ever – the discipline of logic is a particularly timely one, utterly vital to our societies and economies. Computer science and information and communications technology, for example, are rooted in logical and algorithmic reasoning.

Artificial intelligence (AI), the unprecedented developments in which constitute a technological and even anthropological revolution, is itself an innovation founded on logical reasoning. In that connection, through the first global standard-setting instrument concerning the ethical principles of AI, UNESCO will soon be establishing an ethical framework for this innovative product of logic.

Logic is ever-present: when you use AI software, when you turn on your computer, when you develop an argument. Logic is a contemporary universal.

Yet despite being surrounded by logic, we remain quite unaware of its ubiquity. We often apply logic without knowing that we are doing so.

Thus to draw attention to the importance of logic, UNESCO has proclaimed 14 January World Logic Day. This date was chosen in honour of two great logicians of the twentieth century: Kurt Gödel and Alfred Tarski. Gödel, who died on 14 January 1978, established the incompleteness theorem, which transformed the study of logic in the twentieth century. Tarski, who was born on 14 January 1901, developed theories which interacted with those of Gödel.

The first edition of World Logic Day will provide an opportunity for numerous debates – at universities, research institutes, foundations and associations – on the significance of logic in the twenty-first century. Together with the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences (CIPSH) and all its partners, UNESCO applauds the organization of such events and extends its wishes for their success.