

UNITED NATIONS



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**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY  
OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

*“Together for a better world for all  
including persons with disabilities in development”*

**3 December 2011**

It is thirty years since the United Nations first observed the International Year of Disabled Persons under the theme “Full Participation and Equality”. During that period, there has been significant progress in raising awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities and in strengthening the international normative framework to realize those rights – from the World Programme of Action (1982) to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

More and more countries are committing to protecting and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. However, many challenges remain. Persons with disabilities experience higher rates of poverty and deprivation and are twice as likely to lack health care. Employment rates of persons with disabilities in some countries are as low as one-third of that of the overall population. In developing countries, the gap in primary school attendance rates between children with disabilities and others ranges from 10 per cent to 60 per cent.

This multi-dimensional exclusion represents a huge cost, not only to persons with disabilities but to society as a whole. This year’s International Day of Persons with Disabilities reminds us that development can only be sustainable when it is equitable, inclusive and accessible for all. Persons with disabilities need therefore to be included at all stages of development processes, from inception to monitoring and evaluation.

Addressing negative attitudes, the lack of services or ready access to them, and other harmful social, economic and cultural barriers will benefit all of society.

On this International Day of Persons with Disabilities, I call on governments, civil society and the global community to work for and alongside persons with disabilities to achieve inclusive, sustainable and equitable development worldwide.