

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY
OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES****3 December 2009**

The theme of this year's International Day of Persons with Disabilities is "making the Millennium Development Goals disability-inclusive." As we prepare for next September's MDG summit, we must ensure that our efforts are all-inclusive and improve living standards and quality of life for everyone.

We are all vulnerable to disability, temporary or permanent, especially as we grow older. In most countries, at least one person in 10 is disabled by physical, mental or sensory impairment. A quarter of the global population is directly affected by disability, as care-givers or family members.

Persons with disabilities encounter many disadvantages. They are often among the poorest and most excluded members of society. Yet they routinely show tremendous resilience, and achieve great heights in all spheres of human endeavour.

Experience shows that when persons with disabilities are empowered to participate and lead the process of development, the entire community opens up. Their involvement creates opportunities for everyone -- with or without a disability. The message for the MDGs is clear: putting persons with disabilities and their communities at the heart of our efforts is a proven way to advance the development agenda.

The United Nations advocates for universal human rights and development for all as fundamental goals and as essential foundations for peace, security and prosperity. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which entered into force in 2008, is one of our most important tools to advance this cause. We must continue to work for its implementation and its universality.

On this International Day, let us pledge to break down the barriers to participation and access which persons with disabilities face in their daily lives. Let us empower them as an indispensable means for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and development for all.

