

## **Message of the Secretary-General on International Youth Day 2002**

As we celebrate this third International Youth Day, the global community is engaged in the final preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg at the end of this month. In these preparations, in the Summit itself, and in the follow-up work, the engagement of young people is crucial.

Ten years ago, the Earth Summit in Rio gave birth to Agenda 21, a landmark achievement in integrating environmental, economic and social concerns into a single policy framework. It contains recommendations for action, including detailed proposals for how to reduce wasteful consumption patterns, combat poverty, protect the atmosphere, oceans and biodiversity, and promote sustainable agriculture.

The Millennium Declaration strengthened our resolve as world leaders agreed on a range of time-bound targets to meet the needs of their peoples and to free them from abject poverty and disease, from the scourge of war, and from the threat of living on a planet that can no longer sustain its inhabitants.

While it is the responsibility of Governments to ensure these commitments are translated into action, they cannot do it alone. They need to be spurred on by the voices of people everywhere. That is where young people come in. Just as youth have been active in the preparations for the Johannesburg Summit, so must they remain active in the follow-up, and keep making their voices heard as the main stakeholders in our planet's future.

The notion of intergenerational solidarity is central to sustainable development. As the saying tells us -- we have not inherited the earth from our parents, we simply borrow it from our children. On this International Youth Day, I call on all of us to make the best possible use of young people's imagination, energy and indomitable spirit, in the cause of sustaining the future for succeeding generations.

Kofi A. Annan