

UNITED NATIONS



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**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY**

**12 August 2004**

The theme of this year's observance of International Youth Day is "Youth in an Intergenerational Society". Today's world has the largest number of youths ever, with almost half its population under 25 years of age. At the same time, by the year 2050, the number of people 60 and older will triple, to nearly 1.9 billion. To prepare for the future, we must promote solidarity between generations *today*.

Young people everywhere are preparing for productive, meaningful lives in work, society and family. To be successful, they need access to education and health care. They must also overcome obstacles such as HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, crime and persistent unemployment, which frustrate the potential of all too many young people at a crucial stage in their lives.

Two decades from now, these same people will form the middle generation that supports ever increasing numbers of dependents: not only their children, but their parents as well. They understand the importance of fulfilling this responsibility, but they will be able to do so only if we invest now, and ensure they have the knowledge and skills to take advantage of the opportunities opening up to them.

In most societies, older persons continue to contribute actively, yet the dependence between generations will grow ever larger. The ageing of our world is an issue for young people, too. The General Assembly, for its part, will address the question next year as part of its ten-year review of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, which was adopted in 1995.

On this fifth observance of International Youth Day, let us celebrate generational interdependence, and recognize that all members of society have contributions to make and needs to fulfill. Intergenerational solidarity means they can do it together. I encourage everyone celebrating International Youth Day, including the many young people gathered in Barcelona for the Third World Youth Festival, to do their part. Let us draw on the talents and wisdom of all people, and build societies for all ages.