

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

--

**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN**

**15 October 2009**

Today, on the second commemoration of the International Day of Rural Women, we recognize the important contributions of rural women, including indigenous women, to sustainable development and the sound management of natural resources.

We highlight these accomplishments in a year that also marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which is the only international human rights treaty that specifically addresses the rights of rural women. The Convention calls on all States parties to ensure that women fully participate in rural development; have access to health care, social security programmes, training, education, credit and loans; and benefit equally from infrastructure investments such as sanitation, water, transport and communications.

Sadly, rural women in many parts of the world continue to face severe deprivation in enjoying these rights. They are among those hit hardest by the inadequate rate of progress in improving maternal health. They have limited access to life-saving resources such as drinking water, electricity and roads. Too many rural women and girls are not in school. And they lack equitable access to decision-making processes, meaning that their voices are not heard.

As the global economic crisis continues to unfold, let us commit to increasing investments in the resources, infrastructure and services which would ease rural women's workloads and release their time and energy for engagement in the labour market and public life.

As we near the UN Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen in December, let us make sure that rural women are part of the process and that the outcome addresses their contributions, priorities and needs.

And as the United Nations itself seeks to strengthen its work to empower women around the world, let us move swiftly to get the new, single gender equality entity agreed by the General Assembly up and running.

On this International Day, let us pledge to do our utmost to put the rights, needs and aspirations of rural women much higher on the global agenda.