

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS
1 October 2021

Staying connected with loved ones. Attending a religious service. Taking a stance. All of these actions and many more are increasingly carried out online, especially as individuals and communities grapple with restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As we face the challenge of navigating our world's growing reliance on technology, perhaps no population could benefit more from support than older persons.

“Digital Equity for all Ages,” the theme of this year’s International Day of Older Persons, offers an important chance to expand opportunities across generations for the benefit of society as a whole.

Older persons have often been left more isolated during the pandemic. They are also at greater risk of suffering from the rising threat of cybercrime. While taking all possible measures to hold to account those unscrupulous criminals preying on older persons, we must also work to strengthen the digital skills of the older persons as an important defence and means to improve their well-being.

Older persons are far more than a vulnerable group; they are a source of knowledge, experience and rich contributions to our collective progress. When older persons can access, learn and use new technology, they will be better equipped to contribute to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), our universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy health, peace and prosperity.

On this year’s International Day of Older Persons, I call for more inclusive policies, strategies and actions to achieve digital equality for people of all ages.