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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

2 April 2016

The international community is now embarking on the challenge of realizing the ambitious and universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The equal participation and active involvement of persons with autism will be essential for achieving the inclusive societies envisioned by the Sustainable Development Goals.

Autism is a lifelong condition that affects millions of people worldwide. It is not well-understood in many countries, and too many societies shun people with autism.

This is a violation of human rights and a waste of human potential. I have seen the dynamism and commitment of persons with autism. Earlier this year, I was honoured to engage in a dialogue with one such young man at United Nations Headquarters in New York. I was especially impressed by his innovative approach to the issue of how we can reach the SDGs.

While persons with autism naturally have a wide range of abilities and different areas of interest, they all share the capacity for making our world a better place. The United Nations is proud to champion the autism awareness movement. The rights, perspectives and well-being of people with autism, and all persons with disabilities, are integral to the 2030 Agenda and its commitment to leave no-one behind.

The transition to adulthood is especially sensitive. As a strong advocate of mobilizing the world's youth to contribute to our collective future, I call for societies to invest more funds in enabling young persons with autism to be part of their generation's historic push for progress.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. On this World Autism Awareness Day, I call for advancing the rights of individuals with autism and ensuring their full participation and inclusion as valued members of our diverse human family who can contribute to a future of dignity and opportunity for all.