



President of the General Assembly
His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser

Remarks
International Literacy Day 2012

10 September 2012
New York

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
And Dear Children,

Good Afternoon.

It is an honour for me to be here with you for this celebration of International Literacy Day.

I wish to state from the outset that reading and writing remain crucial for our development.

Reading and writing help us grow.

And they are critical for progress, equality and empowerment.

When every child has access to a quality education, we can create a ripple effect of opportunity for generations to come.

Today, however, the global scale of illiteracy remains serious and overwhelming.

Some 793 million adults – two-thirds of them women – lack basic literacy skills.

Such illiteracy makes poverty worse and deepens deprivation.

International Literacy Day is an opportunity for all of us to reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that everyone can read and write.

This annual day reminds us that, though some progress has been made, we can and we must do more.

The timing of this year's International Literacy Day is very relevant. This is because it is happening just before the official launch of Secretary-General's Global Initiative on Education, called, Education First, on 26 September 2012.

I congratulate the Secretary-General for his decision to appoint former Prime Minister of the UK, His Excellency Mr. Gordon Brown as the UN Special Envoy for Global Education.

As Special Envoy, Mr. Brown will work to galvanize support for the Secretary-General's Global Initiative on Education.

I am confident that he will be successful in his endeavours.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this International Day for Literacy, I call upon Member States to reaffirm their own commitments in this matter. These commitments are outlined in resolution A/56/116, in which the General Assembly proclaimed the ten year period beginning 1st January 2003, and ending this December, as the United Nations Literacy Decade.

This Decade aims to increase literacy levels and to empower populations worldwide.

The goal of universal literacy calls for more effective efforts and also, renewed political will at all levels - locally, nationally and internationally.

I urge Member States to work together to achieve this goal.

I would also like to call attention to the valuable role of civil society in tackling illiteracy.

The work of civil society groups can directly target the specific needs of societies and people.

Today, you will have the opportunity to hear from representatives of five organizations that work very closely on the issues of literacy and education.

First, the Harlem Academy: this is an independent school that assists bright, motivated children in Harlem, here in New York, to realize their full potential.

The Eco Boys and Girls is an organisation that uses education and entertainment to teach children the value of respecting the environment.

The " Infinite Family", inspires and motivates teens with limited resources and support in South Africa.

And, Noah's Arc Foundation instils important values in youth through basketball and sculpture.

And last but not least, the National Education Association, NEA, has always been ahead of its time, crusading and advocating for the benefit of students and education professionals, and also for quality public education.

These organizations are making great strides in the promotion of literacy.

Their methods are dynamic and tailored to unique circumstances.

I welcome them to the UN today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Children,

Let me close by making a wish:

My wish is that, genuine progress would be made in education and global literacy would be realized in achieving literacy-for-all.

Ensuring literacy-for-all is my responsibility.

It is your responsibility.

It is our responsibility.

Thank you.

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