THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE ON WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

15 June 2012

The World Health Organization estimates that between 4 and 6 per cent of
older persons worldwide have suffered from a form of elder abuse -- physical,
emotional, financial. Furthermore, emerging research suggests that abuse, neglect and
violence against older persons, both at home and in institutions, are much more
prevalent than currently acknowledged.

Such abuse is an unacceptable attack on human dignity and human rights.
Making matters even worse, cases often remain unreported and unaddressed.

Alarmed at this widening problem, the United Nations General Assembly has
proclaimed World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, a new observance to be marked
annually on 15 June.

Respect for elders is an integral part of many societies. As people live longer,
and as we strive for sustainable and inclusive development, it is time to revive and
expand our appreciation for those who have advanced in years. A modern civilization
can only live up to that name if it preserves the tradition of honouring, respecting and
protecting society’s elders.

As we commemorate the Day for the first time, let us all join in reaffirming
that the human rights of older persons are as absolute as those of all human beings.

I call upon Governments and all concerned actors to design and carry out more
effective prevention strategies and stronger laws and policies to address all aspects of
elder abuse. Let us work together to optimize living conditions for older persons and
enable them to make the greatest possible contribution to our world.