

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN
15 October 2010**

Today we recognize the important contributions of rural women, including indigenous women, to development. Rural women are farmers, fishers, herders and entrepreneurs; keepers of ethnic identities, traditional knowledge and sustainable practices; care-givers, parents and guardians. They are essential to agricultural development, food and nutrition security and the management of natural resources.

This year, the International Day of Rural Women falls at the beginning of the International Year of Youth, providing an opportunity to highlight the importance of ensuring that young rural women and girls can play an equal role in sustainable rural and national development.

Rural women do most of the agricultural work in developing countries, but endure the worst working conditions, with low pay and little or no social protection. Rural women produce most of the world's food, yet they are often excluded from land tenure and the credit and business services they need to prosper. They are the primary users and custodians of local natural resources, but are seldom given a voice on national and local bodies that decide how these resources are managed. They are the care-givers and managers of households, but rarely share these responsibilities equally with men or have a say in major household decisions.

At last month's Millennium Development Goals Summit in New York, Member States pledged to ensure equal access for rural women to productive resources, land, financing, technologies, training and markets. They also committed to the full and equal participation of rural women in national development – not simply as equal beneficiaries, but as equal partners.

On this International Day, I call on governments and communities everywhere to ensure these promises are met so that rural women and girls can enjoy a full range of rights – from property and inheritance, to health, education and freedom from violence.