

Media Update

30 September 2016

United Nations

Secretary-General Message

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS

1 October 2016

The International Day of Older Persons is our chance to take a stand against the destructive problem of ageism.

While older persons are often said to enjoy particular respect, the reality is that too many societies limit them, denying access to jobs, loans and basic services. The marginalization and devaluing of older persons takes a heavy toll. It undermines their productivity and experience in the workforce, in volunteerism and through civil engagement while constraining their capacity for caregiving as well as financial and other support to families and communities. Ageism frequently intersects with other forms of discrimination based on gender, race, disability and other grounds, compounding and intensifying its effects.

Ending ageism and securing the human rights of older persons is an ethical and practical imperative. The stakes are high and growing. The global population of older persons is expected to rise from just over 900 million in 2015 to 1.4 billion by 2030 and 2.1 billion by 2050, when there will be roughly the same the number of older persons and children under 15.

I condemn ageism in all its forms and call for measures to address this violation of human rights as we strive to improve societies for people of all ages. This demands changing the way older persons are portrayed and perceived, from being seen as a burden to being appreciated for the many positive contributions they make to our human family.

I also call for greater legal guarantees of equality for older persons to prevent ageism from resulting in discriminatory policies, laws and treatment. I urge policy makers to compile better data and statistics on older persons'



health, economic status and general wellbeing in order to better address their concerns. And I hope we will all reflect on our prejudicial attitudes and consider how, as individuals, we can counter ageism.

We have a clear roadmap to transformation: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This visionary plan and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize inclusion and equality, promising to leave no one behind. Older persons are both agents and beneficiaries of change. By advancing progress on the SDGs, we can mobilize the considerable talents, energy and experience of all older persons in carrying out this Agenda.

Let us mark the International Day of Older Persons by forcefully rejecting all forms of ageism and working to enable older persons to realize their potential as we honour our pledge to build a life of dignity and human rights for all.

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INTERNATIONAL DAY OF NON-VIOLENCE

2 October 2016

Every year on the International Day of Non-Violence, we re-commit ourselves to the cause of peace, as exemplified by the life of Mahatma Gandhi who was born on this day 147 years ago.

We know that a culture of non-violence begins with respect for others, but it does not end there. To nurture peace, we must respect nature. I am pleased this year's International Day of Non-Violence puts the focus on sustainability and the environment.



In all he did, Gandhi honoured our obligation to all living things. He reminded us that “Earth provides enough to satisfy everyone’s needs, but not everyone’s greed.” Gandhi also challenged us to “be the change we wish to see in the world”.

Today that commitment is reflected in a momentous way. India is depositing its instrument of ratification to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. What better way to commemorate Mahatma Gandhi and his legacy for people and planet.

I warmly congratulate India for its climate leadership, and for building on the strong momentum we see from all corners of the globe for the agreement to enter into force as quickly as possible this year. India's ratification of the agreement moves the world an important step closer toward achieving that goal.

I urge all countries to complete their domestic processes for ratification and also strive in all activities to achieve progress through non-violence. This is essential to building a safer, healthier and more peaceful world.

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WORLD HABITAT DAY

3 October 2016

Later this month, Governments and their partners will meet in Quito, Ecuador, for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III). Held every 20 years, the Habitat conference is designed to reflect on the state of human settlements and on what we want the towns and cities of the future to look like.

With the world embarking this year on implementing the historic 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Habitat III has particular resonance. The 2030 Agenda is a comprehensive, integrated and inclusive blueprint for



peace, prosperity, dignity and opportunity for all people on a healthy planet. Achieving its 17 Sustainable Development Goals will depend, in large part, on whether we can make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Achieving that objective is the aim of the New Urban Agenda, which Governments will adopt in Quito. The New Urban Agenda is an action-oriented document that will set global standards for sustainable urban development, and help us to rethink how we plan, manage and live in cities. Its drafting has been the result of an inclusive and participatory process among Governments and all urban actors.

More than half the global population already lives in urban areas. Approximately a quarter of these urban dwellers live in slums or informal settlements. The unplanned rapid expansion of towns and cities means an increasing number of poor and vulnerable people are living in precarious conditions, without adequate living space or access to basic services, such as water, sanitation, electricity and health care. They are often isolated from opportunities for decent work and vulnerable to forced evictions and homelessness. Providing access to adequate housing for all is high among the priorities of the New Urban Agenda.

On this World Habitat Day, I urge national and local governments, city planners and communities everywhere to keep “Housing at the Centre”. Guaranteeing dignity and opportunity for all depends on people having access to affordable and adequate housing. I look forward to a successful Habitat III Conference that will help us advance our sustainable development agenda for the benefit of all humankind.
