

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY****12 August 2010**

This year's commemoration of International Youth Day also marks the launch of the International Year of Youth, under the theme "Dialogue and Mutual Understanding".

Today's challenging social and economic environment warrant a special focus on youth. Eighty-seven per cent of people aged 15 to 24 live in developing countries. The global economic crisis has had a disproportionate impact on young people; they have lost jobs, struggled to find even low-wage employment and seen access to education curtailed. As economies slowly begin to stabilize, the needs of young people should be paramount.

This is a moral imperative and a developmental necessity. But it is also an opportunity: the energy of youth can ignite faltering economies. I am regularly inspired by the good will, talent and idealism of the young people I meet across the world. They are making important contributions to our work to eradicate poverty, contain the spread disease, combat climate change and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. I call on Member States to increase their investments in young people so they can do even more.

During the International Year, the United Nations and its youth organization partners will focus on the need to encourage dialogue and understanding across generations, cultures and religions. In a world in which different peoples and traditions are coming into closer, more frequent contact than ever before, it is crucial that young people learn how to listen intently, empathize with others, acknowledge divergent opinions, and be able to resolve conflicts. Few endeavors are more important than nurturing these skills, and educating young people about human rights, for in them we not only see the next generation of leaders, but also crucial stakeholders of today. Let us also recognize that older generations themselves stand to learn a great deal from the experiences and examples of young people as they come of age in a world of accelerating interconnectedness.

As we launch this International Year, let us acknowledge and celebrate what youth can do to build a safer, more just world. Let us strengthen our efforts to include young people in policies, programmes and decision-making processes that benefit their futures and ours.