

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE FOR WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY 2010**

**2 April 2010**

Autism is a complex and inadequately understood disability with a wide range of manifestations. Children and adults with autism – and, indeed, those living with disabilities in general – have a double burden. In addition to the daily challenges of their disability, they must also cope with the negative attitudes of society, inadequate support for their needs and, in some cases, blatant discrimination.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which entered into force in May 2008, is a powerful tool to redress such situations. It aims to promote equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities. As of today, 144 countries have signed the Convention and 83 have ratified it.

World Autism Awareness Day is dedicated to creating greater understanding about autism and promoting universal adherence to the UN Convention. By combining research and awareness-raising efforts, we can provide adults and children with disabilities such as autism the protection, support and full membership of an inclusive society.

As we commemorate World Autism Awareness Day 2010, let us remember that each of us can take on that responsibility. Let us join persons with autism, their families and their advocates in a community of voices for greater awareness and understanding. Let us also look within, and re-evaluate our attitudes and those of our societies so we can remove the prejudices that discriminate against persons with disabilities. Let us dedicate ourselves to creating a fair and caring society that affords true dignity and rights for all.