

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE ON THE INAUGURATION OF
WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY**

2 April 2008

Today, the world marks the first commemoration of World Autism Awareness Day. I commend this important initiative spearheaded by the State of Qatar, and applaud the leadership of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al Missned, the Consort of His Highness the Emir of Qatar, in raising awareness about children with developmental disabilities. Her Highness's vision and initiatives have helped to empower children with disabilities and their communities in the Arab region and worldwide.

On this day, the United Nations reaffirms its commitment to the rights and well-being of people with disabilities -- a commitment rooted in our fundamental principle of universal human rights for all. Throughout its history, the United Nations family has promoted the rights and well-being of the disabled, including children with developmental disabilities. It is especially fitting that this inaugural Day falls in 2008 -- the year in which we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration for Human Rights, and expect to see the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the General Assembly in 2006.

As we advance the universal human rights of children with disabilities, let us focus on building enabling environments for them to prosper as future members of their communities, citizens of their countries and as fully-fledged members of the global community. Let us pay tribute to the courage of children with autism and their families, as they strive every day to confront the disability with a powerful combination of determination, creativity and hope. Let us empower them and respond to their needs today, so as to make our societies more accessible, enabling and empowering for all our children tomorrow.
