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PROMOTE MORE POSITIVE IMAGE OF AGEING, SECRETARY-GENERAL URGES

IN MESSAGE FOR INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS

Following is the text of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message on the international Day of Older Persons, to be observed on 1 October:

In the tenth and final year of my tenure as Secretary-General, after a full career in the service of the United Nations, I have a personal stake in the fate of older persons and the fulfilment of their aspirations. But I am only one of 600 million persons in the world over the age of 60. As people across the globe come to live increasingly longer lives, our entire human family has a stake in encouraging and easing a productive, active and healthy ageing process. The whole world stands to gain from an empowered older generation, with the potential to make tremendous contributions to the development process and to the work of building more productive, peaceful and sustainable societies.

That is why the theme of this year's International Day of Older Persons is "Improving the Quality of Life for Older Persons: Advancing UN Global Strategies". It is a call to all communities to work for policies and programmes that will enable older persons to live in an environment that enhances their capabilities, fosters their independence and provides them with adequate support and care as they age.

That means ensuring housing, transportation and other living conditions that allow people to maintain their independence for as long as possible, and "age in place"-- yet remain active -- within their own communities. Equally important, it means recognizing and respecting the dignity, authority, wisdom and productivity of older persons in all societies, particularly in their roles as volunteers and multigenerational caregivers. And that, in turn, means promoting a more positive image of ageing.

On this International Day of Older Persons, I call on Governments, the private sector, civil society organizations and people everywhere to focus on building a society for all ages -- as envisioned in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and in line with the Millennium Development Goals and wider global development agenda. Together, we can and must ensure that people live not only longer lives, but better, more enriching, rewarding and fulfilling lives.

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