

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

--

**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS**

**1 October 2011**

Next year marks 10 years since the adoption of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The theme of this year's International Day of Older Persons, "*Launch of Madrid Plus 10: The growing opportunities and challenges of global ageing*", reflects this upcoming milestone. This year we also commemorate 20 years since the adoption of the United Nations Principles for Older Persons. These basic principles – independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity – both enshrine the human rights of older persons and give us the objectives for which we strive.

Nearly two-thirds of older persons live in developing countries, yet older persons are still largely excluded from the wider global, regional and national development agendas. At a time when the international community is preparing to take stock of sustainable development and is looking to forge a development agenda for the future, it is important that the needs and contributions of older persons become a bigger part of the picture. Older persons are vibrant and essential contributors to the development and stability of society, and more can and should be done to utilize their potential.

Over the last decade, there has been progress in the formulation of national plans of action related to ageing, including the emergence of non-contributory pensions in some developing countries. However, discrimination and social exclusion persist. These issues are a priority for the recently established General Assembly open-ended working group on ageing.

As we commemorate milestones in global development for older persons, let us recommit to the full implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action. In the current fiscal environment, we must be vigilant in ensuring that the provision of social protection, long-term care and access to public health for the elderly is not undermined. On this International Day of Older Persons, I call on governments and communities everywhere to provide more opportunities for their ageing populations.