

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE FOR ON INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

12 August 2011

“Change Our World” is more than the theme of this year’s International Youth Day; it is an injunction that should inspire young people at all times.

Far too many of the world’s more than one billion young people lack the education, freedom and opportunities they deserve. Yet despite these constraints – and in some cases because of them – young people are mobilizing in growing numbers to build a better future. Over the past year, they have achieved stunning results, overturning dictatorships and sending waves of hope across regions and around the world.

Young people are gifted with open minds and a keen awareness of emerging trends, and are bringing their energy, ideas and courage to some of the most complex and important challenges facing the human family. They often understand better than older generations that we can transcend our religious and cultural differences in order to reach our shared goals. They are standing up for the rights of oppressed peoples, including those who suffer discrimination based on gender, race and sexual orientation. They are confronting sensitive issues in order to stop the spread of HIV. And they are often the leading proponents of sustainability and green life-styles

The international community must continue to work together to expand the horizons of opportunity for these young women and men and answer their legitimate demands for dignity, development and decent work. Failing to invest in our youth is a false economy. Investments in young people will pay great dividends in a better future for all.

This Day marks the end of the International Year of Youth, a milestone in global advocacy by and for the world’s young people. My hope is that this experience will now provide a foundation to go even further in harnessing the talents and energies of young people. To them I say: you have the opportunity to change our world. Seize it.