

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY
OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

3 December 2012

This year's Paralympic Games were a reminder of the immense potential of persons with disabilities to soar and to inspire. One girl wrote to a Paralympic gold-medal champion, "Watching as you overcome the difficulties of life, reaching for new victories and new heights in sports, I derive strength and inspiration."

Persons with disabilities have a significant positive impact on society, and their contributions can be even greater if we remove barriers to their participation. With more than one billion persons with disabilities in our world today, this is more important than ever.

My United Nations Messenger of Peace focusing on this issue, the legendary superstar Stevie Wonder, embodies the spirit of service to others. After playing a spectacular UN Day concert at our Headquarters this year, he said, "I haven't even touched one iota of what I want to do for and through the United Nations to help heal this world."

Our challenge is to provide all people with the equality of access they need and deserve. Ultimately, this will create a better world for all. As negotiators at this year's "Rio+20" United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development agreed, accessibility is critical to achieve the future we want.

Together, we must strive to achieve the goals of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: to eliminate discrimination and exclusion, and to create societies that value diversity and inclusion.

In order to spur action to bridge the gap between well-meaning commitments and long-overdue actions, the United Nations General Assembly will hold a High-Level meeting on disability and development next year. This gathering will take place as the international community works to forge a post-2015 development agenda, presenting an opportunity to ensure that the rights, concerns and contributions of persons with disabilities are fully taken into account.

This International Day of Persons with Disabilities marks the official opening of preparations for the High-level Meeting. Let us make the most of our commemoration by working to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy their rights and realize their great potential.