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P R E S S R E L E A S E

Secretary-General urges youth to make voices heard, hold world leaders to anti-poverty pledges, in message on International Day

Following is UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message on International Youth Day, observed 12 August:

Today, there are almost 3 billion people in the world under the age of 25. More than half a billion of them live on less than two dollars a day. More than 100 million school-aged children are not in school. Every day, almost 30,000 children die of poverty. And 7,000 young people become infected with HIV/AIDS.

All that can be changed, if we work together to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

The Goals were adopted five years ago by all the world's Governments as a blueprint for building a better world in the 21st century. They represent a partnership.

Poor countries have pledged to govern better, and invest in their own people through health care and education.

Rich countries have pledged to support them, through aid, debt relief, and fairer trade.

Next month, Heads of State and Government will meet at the United Nations for the 2005 World Summit -- expected to be one of the largest gatherings of leaders ever. I believe we will have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address some of the most pressing challenges of our era.

Leaders need to be reminded of their promise to translate the Millennium Development Goals into reality. That is where young people like you come in. Your voices can hold leaders to those pledges -- at the 2005 Summit and beyond.

I know you will not accept a world where others die of hunger, remain illiterate and lack human dignity.

So please make sure your voices are heard. Make sure your generation is the one to defeat poverty.