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Secretary-General, Marking World Down Syndrome Day, Urges All to Ensure Post-2015 Goals Include Persons with Disabilities in Addressing Equality for All

- **SECRETARY-GENERAL**

PRESS RELEASE

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's message for World Down Syndrome Day, observed on 21 March:

This year's World Down Syndrome Day falls as the international community is striving to create a universal, transformative agenda for sustainable development. The links between disability, human rights and development span a wide spectrum of development issues relating to economic, social and environmental factors. Every year on this observance, we reaffirm that persons with Down syndrome are entitled to the full enjoyment of all human rights. This year, we must make every effort to ensure that the new sustainable development goals address equality and help build a life of dignity for all, including people with Down syndrome and other persons with disabilities.

Persons with Down syndrome face stigmatization, abuse and lack of support. Too often, their challenges begin early in life when they are excluded from quality education systems. Adequate access to health care, early intervention programmes and inclusive education, as well as appropriate research, are vital to the growth and development of individuals with Down syndrome.

The role of families is central to supporting persons with Down syndrome by promoting their equal status in society and empowering them to be their own advocates. At the same time, we must recognize our collective responsibility to create conditions for all persons with disabilities to make valuable contributions to our shared future. We must promote inclusive policies and raise awareness about social justice for people with Down syndrome and do everything possible to enable

them to live where they want and with whom, to form their own families, to administer their own assets and to pursue their own happiness.

I applaud all those who champion the rights and lives of persons with disabilities, and I urge others to support them. Let us use this World Down Syndrome Day to advocate for a more socially just and inclusive world.