

UNITED NATIONS

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**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY**  
**15 September 2009**

The International Day of Democracy is a reaffirmation by the international community of its commitment to build participatory and inclusive societies, based on the rule of law and fundamental human rights.

Democracy is not only an end in itself; it contributes powerfully to economic and social progress, international peace and security and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms.

While democracy continues to be upheld as a universally relevant set of principles and an optimal social and political system, the challenges to consolidating democracy around the world remain formidable and numerous. Restoring or building new democracies, preserving fragile democracies and improving the quality of even long-established democracies requires commitment and hard work.

The primary responsibility for democratic change lies within national societies. At the same time, the international community can play a vital supportive role. Indeed, demand for UN assistance with institution-building, elections, the rule of law, the strengthening of civil society and other key aspects of democracy has grown considerably. This trend is likely to continue.

That means the United Nations needs to continually evaluate its efforts, with a particular focus on coherence, since there are many UN initiatives in this area. To ensure that UN assistance truly helps to build national capacities and nurture democratic cultures, I have, as an essential first step, circulated a Guidance Note on Democracy to all parts of the United Nations, including field presences. The note sets out the UN framework for democracy based on universal principles, and commits the Organization to principled, coherent and consistent action in support of democracy.

Democratic principles are woven throughout the normative fabric of the United Nations. On this International Day, let us rededicate ourselves to those principles, and to promoting peace, development and human rights through the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law.