



**Joint Message on the Occasion of World Teachers' Day,
5 October 2002**

If you are not a teacher, take a few moments today to consider why you did not choose this profession. What would it take in your own country to attract and prepare someone like yourself for such a commitment? How might someone like you best respond to the learning needs of children, especially those who face discrimination, such as girls? If, on the other hand, you are already a member of the teaching profession, rest assured that the United Nations and all its partners support and defend your rights and understand the full weight of your responsibilities.

The underlying frustrations that trigger so many of the tensions and conflicts across the world underscore the need for a better educated, more tolerant society. Teachers are central to any process that aims to raise educational levels, promote learning to live together in peace and eliminate discrimination. Teachers work with children and young people who will have to contribute, now and later as they become adults, to building more tolerant societies. However, at the very moment when teachers are required in large numbers to provide this education, it is alarming that many countries are facing teacher shortages. As leaders of the United Nations bodies most directly concerned with teachers, we encourage governments as well as society at large to reflect seriously on this dilemma and to take appropriate action. The crucial role played by teachers everywhere must not be underestimated or taken for granted.


We pay tribute today to those who choose and devote themselves to a teaching career, knowing that not just anyone can teach effectively--whether in a formal setting or a non-formal one--and that no matter how sophisticated certain tools of the trade may become, they cannot replace the human contact, understanding and judgement of a professionally trained teacher. We urge governments to ensure that teachers have good physical, moral, and remunerative conditions in which to work and live, as set forth in the two international Recommendations concerning the status of teachers.

It is equally vital that teachers and teachers' organizations, like others with a strong stake in education such as students and parents, have a real voice in decision-making on educational reforms and innovations by means of a greatly enhanced process of social dialogue with educational authorities at all levels.

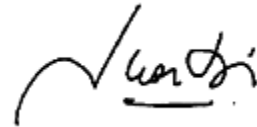
At the recent UN Special Session on Children, New York, May 2002, a young delegate said:

"What we need are good teachers who can get you to question yourself and what you know about the world, and who build communities in schools. Good teachers are what we need" (Nikki Sanchez-Hood, 15 years, Canada)

On World Teachers Day 2002, we applaud the teachers of the world.



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