

Message for World Population Day 2011

Youth and adolescents in a world of 7 billion

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This year, on October 31st, world population reaches 7 billion. This milestone represents a challenge, an opportunity and a call to action. Today on World Population Day, I am launching a campaign called *7 Billion Actions*. It will engage people on what it means to live in a world with 7 billion people and encourage action on issues that affect all of us.

While poverty, inequality and increased stress on resources represent major challenges, the world is more interconnected than ever before, creating enormous possibilities. We now have unprecedented capacity to share information and ideas, and engage communities across the globe to solve common problems.

Reducing inequities and improving living standards for people alive today – as well as for generations to follow – will require new ways of thinking and unparalleled global cooperation. The moment to act is now.

Together, we can forge the future with young people, advance rights for girls and women, and safeguard the natural resources on which we all depend.

Protecting reproductive health and rights is fundamental to our collective future and sustainable development. Together we can meet the needs of some 215 million women in developing countries who want to plan and space their births but do not have access to modern contraception. Together we can prevent the deaths of 1,000 women every day from complications of pregnancy and childbirth.

When women and adolescent girls have rights and opportunities, their families, communities and nations prosper.

We have an opportunity and responsibility to invest in the world's 1.8 billion adolescents and youth aged 10 to 24. They constitute more than a quarter of the world's population and almost 90 per cent live in developing countries. Every young person deserves education, including sexuality education, and access to comprehensive health services. With the right policies, investments and social support, young people can enjoy healthier lives free of poverty and enhance prospects for peace and stability.

As the most interconnected population, young people are already transforming society, politics and culture. By more actively engaging women and young people, we can build a better future for all generations.

Today on World Population Day, visit 7BillionActions.org to learn about the key issues and find out how you can join the movement. Individual actions multiplied many times over can make a world of difference. Together we are 7 billion people counting on each other.