THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF MINE AWARENESS AND
ASSISTANCE IN MINE ACTION

4 April 2014

It is often said that women hold up half the sky. This year on the International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance, we focus on the important role of women in safeguarding the earth.

Women worldwide are vital to our drive to clear landmines and protect against their indiscriminate effects, teaching people how to live safely in contaminated areas, assisting victims, clearing landmines and disposing of explosive ordnance.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by landmines. They have different needs when it comes to education about risks. And they may face greater challenges when a family member is killed or injured. That is why the United Nations endeavours to listen to the views of women in our mine action work, incorporate their ideas and empower them to contribute even more to our global campaign.

Women can drive progress towards the central goals of mine action, which aims to increase security, rebuild communities, reclaim land and end the looming fear caused by explosive remnants of war. Women can also amplify the benefits of this work as children return to school, economic activity revives and lives and livelihoods are saved through mine action work.

I call for greater measures to involve more women at higher levels in mine action. Governments should do more to address gender in their mine action programmes and through their implementation of the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention.

Fifteen years after it entered into force, I am encouraged that 161 States are now bound by this Convention and I call on all others to follow suit. In this effort, we can take inspiration from the rapid pace of new States that are joining the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and other international instruments aimed at the elimination of threats caused by explosive remnants of war.

The United Nations has a proud record of helping millions of people in mine-affected countries. On this International Day, let us resolve to mobilize the resources, partners and resolve we need to further advance our vision of a planet free from mines.