

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

10 October 2010

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights guarantee the right of everyone to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including to medical care and services, without discrimination of any kind.

The constitution of the World Health Organization refers to the physical, mental and social aspects of our wellbeing, which are closely linked. Mental illnesses seriously affect our bodies and our social relationships, while physical health problems, especially when severe and protracted, can lead to social isolation and mental illness.

But many countries fall far short in treatment for those suffering with mental illness – even though it is relatively inexpensive and easy to deliver. The vast majority of people with mental, neurological and substance use disorders do not receive even the most basic care. Yet such services are essential if we are to offer hope to some of the most marginalized people in the world, especially in developing countries, to live their lives in dignity.

The World Health Organization's mental health Gap Action Programme is the global response to the high demand for these health services. I call on all countries to embrace and fulfil the objectives of this programme. With proper care, tens of millions of people could be treated for depression, schizophrenia, epilepsy and other illnesses.

We must break down the barriers that continue to exclude those with mental or psychosocial disabilities. There is no place in our world for discrimination against those with mental illness. There can be no health without mental health.