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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY

19 August 2009

Today is the first World Humanitarian Day, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly.

It is, above all, a day on which we renew our commitment to help vulnerable, voiceless and marginalized people wherever they may be. That is the abiding mission of the humanitarian community.

This is also a day on which we pay tribute to the legions of heroic humanitarian personnel. These men and women come from many backgrounds. But they share a conviction that one person's suffering is everyone's responsibility.

The date of this observance marks the anniversary of the attack on UN Headquarters in Baghdad which killed 22 dedicated men and women, including the great humanitarian Sergio Vieira de Mello.

We continue to draw inspiration from their legacy, and remain determined to carry it forward. The Sergio Vieira de Mello Foundation is doing just that by establishing an annual prize in his name that will recognize outstanding achievements in the peaceful reconciliation of conflict.

Like Sergio and the other brave colleagues who lost their lives that terrible day, humanitarian personnel venture to troubled regions to help others. For them, there can be no such thing as a forgotten conflict.

But to do that noble work -- to face down threats amid disaster and war -- they need our help. They need us to work tirelessly for their safety, security and independence.

World Humanitarian Day is meant to shine a spotlight on people in need, to ensure they receive the assistance they deserve. Let us redouble our efforts toward this goal. Let us fulfill our humanitarian imperative.

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18 August 2009