Media Update
19 March 2021

United Nations
SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
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MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
21 March 2021

Last year, people around the globe took to the streets to protest the vicious global pandemic of racism.

They recognized racism for what it is.


Racism is a deeply rooted global evil.

It transcends generations and contaminates societies.

It perpetuates inequality, oppression and marginalization.

We see racism in the pervasive discrimination suffered by people of African descent.

We see it in the injustices and oppression endured by indigenous peoples and other ethnic minorities.

We see it in the repugnant views of white supremacists and other extremist groups.

Wherever we see racism, we must condemn it without reservation, without hesitation, without qualification.
This year, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination highlights the important role of youth, who have been in the forefront of the fight against racism.

Young people's attitudes and behaviour will dictate the future shape and look of our societies.

So, I appeal to young people everywhere, as well as educators and leaders, to teach the world that all people are born equal.

Supremacy is an evil lie.

Racism kills.

On this day, and every day, let us work together to rid the world of the pernicious evil of racism so all may live in a world of peace, dignity and opportunity.

[END]

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Humanity’s well-being is inextricably linked to the health of our planet. Forests play a crucial role.

Forests filter the air we breathe and the water we drink. They regulate our climate, absorbing one-third of the global greenhouse gases emitted each year.

Forests provide habitat to 80 per cent of all known terrestrial species, many of which are under threat. Today, more than 1 million of the planet’s estimated 8 million plant and animal species are at risk of extinction.

Some 1.6 billion people depend directly on forests for food, shelter, energy, medicines and income.

Despite all that they provide, forest loss continues at an alarming rate. We continue to lose 10 million hectares of forests, an area roughly the size of Iceland, every year.

Deforestation also increases the risks of infectious disease outbreaks and pandemics.

This year marks the beginning of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, which calls for action to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of forests and other ecosystems.

If we fail to act now, we risk a point of no return. But it is not too late to undo some of the damage we have caused.

The crises our planet faces require urgent action by all — governments, international and civil society organizations, the private sector, local authorities and individuals.
Indigenous peoples are leading the way. They care for the Earth’s biodiversity and achieve conservation results with very few financial resources and little support.

On this International Day of Forests let us plant the seeds for a sustainable future by committing to restore and conserve our forests for the benefit of people and the planet.