

A note to teachers

The Millennium Report: A Common Vision for Humanity

Each new school year brings with it hopes of learning anew, building on prior knowledge and mobilizing energy for new pursuits. Likewise, the beginning of the new millennium brings an unparalleled sense of hope and opportunity. But it can also bring new dangers.

The world has accumulated unprecedented wealth, yet one-sixth of humanity lives in abject poverty. Science and technology have made great progress, yet we are helpless in the face of devastation caused by HIV/AIDS. The world has not known large-scale war during the past 55 years, yet many countries are ravaged by genocide and ethnic violence. We have conquered the moon, yet the health of our earth is threatened by environmental degradation.

How do we confront our future and to whom do we turn for leadership?

One answer has been provided by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan. In a report entitled, "*We the peoples*", *the role of the United Nations in the 21st century*, the Secretary-General presents an overview of the challenges facing humankind and suggests practical solutions. This report, also known as the *Millennium Report*, was prepared in advance of the Millennium Summit of the United Nations (6 – 8 September 2000). In essence, the report provides world leaders with the tools needed to identify problems, to understand their magnitude, to consider how best to confront them and to generate discussions for reaching consensus.

The report is also intended for people in all walks of life. Everyone has a stake in the future of the world; hence everyone should participate however possible in discussing the course the world might take.

As teachers, you can play an important role. You can explain to your students the ideas of the Secretary-General and the role he envisages for the United Nations, and also encourage them to become involved. I invite you to incorporate the themes of the *Millennium Report* in your lesson plans. Whether you teach history, geography, international relations or environmental sciences, the report contains issues and ideas that you should find not only relevant but extremely useful.

To help you achieve this, the Department of Public Information has produced a series of briefing papers addressing the key themes of the Secretary-General's report. Each paper presents an overview of the issue under discussion, identifies recent development, explains the areas needing attention or more effort and includes case studies. Each paper also includes suggested activities for students who are encouraged to involve themselves at local, national and international levels.

The papers have been prepared with four goals in mind:

1. To help young people better understand the challenges the world faces;
2. To let young people know that positive steps are being taken;
3. To help them better understand the many ways in which the United Nations is working to build a better world; and
4. To provide them with practical ideas for getting involved.

It was through the United Nations that the world mobilized some of the great movements of the last half-century, in the process revolutionizing our views of human rights, the environment and conflict resolution. We need to create the same kind of energy and commitment to tackle the challenges of the new millennium. You can help.

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