



Marking [International Volunteer Day](#), Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today saluted volunteers around the world, saying that the information age had provided them with multiple new opportunities to offer their services.

“The timeless act of volunteering in the service of others has taken on new dimensions in today's digital age,” [said](#) Mr. Ban. “Anyone with an Internet connection or a mobile phone can make a difference.”

The UN General Assembly designated 5 December as the International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development – as the Day is formally known – in 1985. It aims to give volunteers everywhere a platform to promote their contributions to development at the local, national and international levels. The theme for this year's Day is 'celebrate volunteering!'

“As we celebrate the impact of volunteers on our world, let us remember the many places they are needed: in war zones and classrooms, in hospitals and homes – wherever struggling people seek a helping hand,” Mr. Ban said. “Let us also remember that volunteering can embrace all people, from the activist who works full-time for a cause, to the occasional citizen who reaches out when he or she can.”

He said volunteers set an example of the “spirit of compassion we need,” while also making a “valuable contribution to reaching our common goals.”

While the UN chief said he applauded “all people who volunteer each year for the benefit of their communities,” he signalled he was especially grateful to the 7,700 people involved with United Nations Volunteers (UNV).

Since launching operations in 1971, the programme has deployed its volunteers to play key roles in contributing to peace and development in some 130 countries. Mr. Ban noted that they “support efforts to prevent conflicts, help societies recover from fighting, promote sustainable development, assist in crisis situations and carry out numerous other projects for the greater good.”

He added that their work had advanced the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)), which enshrine the anti-poverty agenda world leaders and institutions set in 2000, with targets culminating in 2015.

“I am confident they will also contribute to the progress on the post-2015 development agenda,” Mr. Ban said as he additionally issued a wider call for everyone to “renew our determination to offer strength and inspiration to others through volunteerism.”

In a separate [message](#) , the Executive Coordinator for [UNV](#) , Flavia Pansieri, echoed Mr. Ban's appreciation of volunteers, and the effect they have had – and continue to have – on many of the UN's activities.

“Volunteerism plays a significant role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals,” Ms. Pansieri said in a UNV news release. “It plays a healing role by rebuilding trust in a post-conflict society. And its values – of solidarity and engagement – inspire us to live sustainably, so that our human actions do not jeopardise the needs, or the existence, of future generations.”

For its part, the programme noted that volunteerism is found in all cultures, languages, and religions.

“Every year, hundreds of millions of people volunteer their time and skills to help make the world a better place,” it said. “When they volunteer, they help to improve the lives of others and... also gain a greater sense of belonging to their communities.”

Source: [UN News Centre](#)