

**WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY AN OPPORTUNITY TO PAY TRIBUTE TO  
DEDICATED MEN AND WOMEN 'RUSHING BRAVELY TOWARDS DANGER' TO  
HELP PEOPLE IN NEED, SECRETARY-GENERAL SAYS**

*Following is the full text of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks on the launch of the first World Humanitarian Day, New York, August 19<sup>th</sup> 2009:*

This is a solemn day.

I know many of you here are humanitarians who have served around the world.

Many of you have risked your lives to help others. Some of you have lost colleagues or loved ones.

Just one minute ago, I [observed] a minute of silence and paid my tribute to all our fallen distinguished colleagues 6 years ago in Baghdad, including Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Special Representative Sergio Vieira de Mello.

Just yesterday, we again mourned the deaths of two Afghan United Nations staff members, along with more than half a dozen others killed in a suicide attack in Kabul.

Last year, more humanitarian workers were kidnapped, seriously injured or killed during violent attacks than ever before. This is unacceptable.

Today, the first observance of World Humanitarian Day, we remember their sacrifice.

Today, we recognize the millions of people who count on us for their very survival.

The one billion people afflicted by hunger.

The tens of millions forced to flee their homes because of disaster and conflict.

The children who die from diseases we know how to cure.

The women and girls who are brutalized by sexual violence.

We need to tackle these problems at their root.

But until we do, lives will hang in the balance. And the humanitarian community will be on the scene, rushing bravely towards danger, determined to help people in need.

In just a minute, we will see a powerful public service announcement produced by OCHA (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) to mark today's observance.

I am sure you will all be moved, as I was, by the footage of Sergio Vieira de Mello mourning the death of humanitarian workers in Timor-Leste. Like so many other great humanitarians, he and his colleagues faced threats day after day so that others could feel safe.

Today is the anniversary of the Canal Hotel bombing in Iraq which killed Sergio and 21 other people.

I am saddened that the violence continues, including an appalling string of attacks today in Baghdad which took the lives of scores of innocent people.

Each year on August 19<sup>th</sup>, we will honour the memory of fallen humanitarians. We will pay tribute to the dedicated men and women who are out there among the vulnerable, providing hope and help. And we will draw the world's attention to the great magnitude of suffering in our world that needs our urgent attention.

For my part, I pledge to do all that I can as Secretary-General of the United Nations to help victims while protecting the security and independence of the people who work so hard to save them.