

World Humanitarian Day

Inaugural day



19 August 2009

World Humanitarian Day

Established by the General Assembly (GA) of the United Nations in December 2008, 19 August 2009 is the first **World Humanitarian Day**. The designation of the Day is a way to increase public understanding of humanitarian assistance activities worldwide. The Day also aims to honour humanitarian workers who have lost their lives or been injured in the course of their work. The General Assembly invites all countries, the entities of the UN system and international and non-governmental organizations to observe the day annually in an appropriate manner.

Why 19 August? - Six years ago, on 19 August 2003, the United Nations Office in Iraq was bombed and 22 people lost their lives. Among them was Sergio Vieira de Mello, at that time the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Iraq. While there have been many other fatal incidents involving humanitarian personnel the General Assembly decided to use the anniversary of this incident as World Humanitarian Day.

What is planned? - For 2009 the Day will have three areas of focus:

- To draw attention to humanitarian needs worldwide;
- To acknowledge the ongoing work of humanitarian staff around the globe;
- To honour those who have lost their lives in humanitarian service.

The humanitarian community is preparing publicity and information materials which will be ready for dispatch and electronic download by the end of July. The materials will include the following:

- Key messages on World Humanitarian Day
- A one minute Public Service Announcement high definition video film which can be broadcast in the lead up to the day.
- A longer version of the video film which will include a statement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki Moon, which will be released for broadcast only on 19 August 2009.
- A summary of information on the safety and security of humanitarian relief workers.
- A summary of global humanitarian assistance trends in 2009.

These materials will be disseminated widely through the UN Secretariat's networks, such as the Department of Public Information and UN Information Centres around the world, through UN agency distribution mechanisms and via international and non-governmental organisations networks.

What can you do? - Partners receiving this leaflet are encouraged to publicize the Day through their own networks and by doing the following:

- Ensuring that colleagues and members of the general public are made aware of the Day, through dissemination of this leaflet and the one-minute film.
- Using the key messages as points for senior political figures and officials to use in any press interviews or encounters organised specifically for the day.
- Disseminating the information provided as widely as possible through formal and informal networks.
- Lobbying major international and national broadcast networks to show the version of the film incorporating the statement of the Secretary-General.
- Where possible encouraging humanitarian workers to speak to the press about their work.
- Organising public events featuring humanitarian work.

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