



International Volunteer Day, 5 December 2008

Statement by UNV Executive Coordinator Flavia Pansieri

The activities that the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme undertakes and supports around the world provide telling examples of how to realize the values of the United Nations through direct action. Every year, thousands of volunteers are engaged in peace and development projects worldwide including more than 7,500 UNV volunteers who contribute knowledge and skills to build capacity. Millions more volunteers contribute to the vitality of their own communities through voluntary effort.

We live in an increasingly interconnected world where we have a shared interest in supporting each other's struggles and successes. Financial challenges, armed conflicts, disease and natural disasters know no boundaries and we can only overcome them together. By getting involved and contributing to the solutions, we can use this connectedness to our advantage.

On International Volunteer Day 2008, UNV is launching its Online Volunteering service in French and Spanish, and re-launching an upgraded service in English. This service brings together hundreds of development organizations from around the world and thousands of online volunteers. It is a platform for collaboration to address the challenges of peace and development and to contribute in many different ways to helping countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

Using the UNV Online Volunteering service, online volunteers have contributed to environmental projects in Africa, human rights in Asia, youth education in Latin America, and community work worldwide. Online volunteering promotes social inclusion and contributes in a very tangible way to the work of development organizations and communities facing some of the toughest challenges of our time.

These online volunteers are a valuable addition to the work of the many national and international UNV volunteers working on the ground in 140 countries, and the millions of other volunteers worldwide who contribute every day to addressing the challenges of peace and development.

Eight years have passed since the International Year of Volunteers (IYV) in 2001 and volunteerism continues to gain recognition and support. The 10th anniversary of IYV in 2011 is a chance for all volunteer-involving organizations to advance their work in volunteerism, both individually and collectively. Let us expand recognition of the action of volunteers and encourage their engagement to help countries reach the Millennium Development Goals.

The outstanding contribution of volunteers, both onsite and online, is exemplary. I thank all volunteers for their extraordinary commitment and achievements. You are a source of inspiration for us all.