

UN chief calls for greater commitment to boost literacy on International Day



8 September 2009 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today urged the international community to step up efforts to slash the “staggering” number of people worldwide unable to read and write, in a **message** marking International Literacy Day.

Mr. Ban said that around 776 million adults, mostly women, lack basic literacy skills and a fundamental command of mathematics.

In addition, some 75 million children are not in school and drop out rates are high for those who manage to get a start on their education.

“In a world of enormous wealth, in a world in which education and knowledge are the necessary passports to a better life, the scale of illiteracy is truly staggering,” said the Secretary General.

Stressing that literacy means more than simply reading and writing, he said it “gives people tools with which to improve their livelihoods, participate in community decision-making, gain access to information about health care, and much else besides.

“Yet it wouldn’t take much to change the appalling status quo,” he said, calling on “all partners to strengthen their commitment to promoting global literacy and to back this support with the resources needed to achieve real progress.”