

WORLD AUTISM DAY – 2 APRIL 2008

The **United Nations General Assembly** in New York has declared **Wednesday 2 April 2008** as the **first ever World Autism Awareness Day**.

In 2007, 192 representatives of the UN's Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) approved a draft resolution (document A/C.3/62/L.22) introduced by the Qatari delegation designating one special day as World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD). Amongst others, the Day aims to encourage Member States to take measures to raise awareness about children with autism throughout society.

The designation by the United Nations of World Autism Awareness Day would provide a landmark opportunity to focus attention on a global epidemic estimated to affect 35 million people worldwide.

Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of Qatar to the UN, called on Member States to break the “barrier of shame” of people suffering from autism and raise international awareness of the importance of early diagnosis and treatment of the disease.

“Qatar shares the concerns of a number of countries about the high rate of autism in children in all region of the world,” Mr. Al-Nasser said at a **press briefing** at UN Headquarters in New York.

ABOUT AUTISM

Autism is a complex brain disorder that inhibits a person's ability to communicate and develop social relationships, and is often accompanied by extreme behavioral challenges.

In the United States, autism spectrum disorders are diagnosed in one in 150 children, affecting four times as many boys as girls. The diagnosis of autism has increased tenfold in the last decade. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have called autism a national public health crisis whose cause and cure remain unknown.

An estimated 35 million people worldwide are affected with autism, and many in Africa and Asia do not have access to public services. People continue to confuse autism with mental illness and mental retardation. Children are kept at home without schooling due to lack of understanding about the autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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