

C o m m e n t a r y

CELEBRATING THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF
HUMAN RIGHTS

Kofi A. Annan
The Secretary-General of the United Nations

It is a genuine pleasure for me to contribute to the special issue of *Health and Human Rights* celebrating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Throughout this anniversary year, I have argued from Shanghai to Tehran that human rights are universal and indivisible, common to all and necessary for every people's peace and prosperity. We know that human rights must protect not only an individual's person and political liberty, but also their safety and opportunity to escape from poverty.

As this journal has emphasized with passion and conviction, the basic health of every man and woman is a condition for the achievement of other rights, and the basis on which every society thrives and grows. The United Nations has recognized this truth, and in the reform process that I initiated upon taking office, I made human rights a central, cross-cutting priority that would have to be included in the work of every aspect of our efforts in promoting peace and alleviating poverty. It is my aspiration that this universal emphasis on human rights will be reflected at all levels of action — international, national, local — and that health finally will be seen not as a blessing to be wished for, but as a human right to be fought for.

In conclusion, I would like to pay special tribute to the memory of this journal's founder and guiding inspiration, Dr. Jonathan Mann, who served the United Nations with passion, intelligence and integrity. Jonathan Mann was a pio-

neer for peace and progress many times over — founding the WHO's Global Programme on AIDS, establishing the François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights, and defining once and for all the struggle against AIDS as a global struggle for human rights. In a question that continues to inspire all who labor in the service of a better world, Dr. Mann often asked: "People say there is no use trying to change the world. But if we don't try, will it change?"

His legacy proves that if we try, the world can and will change.