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**DOW** **N SYNDROME INTERNATIONAL**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**For immediate release on Friday 10 March 2017**

**People with Down Syndrome go to the Palais des Nations to have their voices heard**

*Celebrated for the 1st time at the UN Geneva, World Down Syndrome Day (21/3) will bring together self-advocates from around the world for the event #MyVoiceMyCommunity*

For the first time, World Down Syndrome Day will be celebrated at the UN in Geneva in a ground-breaking event on 22 March. Self-advocates from around the world will meet with international policy makers, including Mission representatives at the UN Human Rights Council and members of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Self-advocates with Down syndrome, families and other interested persons are welcome to come along and take part in this Open Dialogue, which is part of the 2017 World Down Syndrome Day #MyVoiceMyCommunity campaign.

The event is organised by Down Syndrome International, with the support of the Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations Geneva and the International Disability Alliance (IDA). A preparation workshop will be held on 21 March (21/3).

Dates: Tuesday 21 March and Wednesday 22 March 2017.

Location: Geneva, Switzerland. See below for venues.

**Proceedings**

**Self-Advocacy Workshop**

To be held on Tuesday 21 March 2017 from 1pm-5pm at the [John Knox Centre](https://www.johnknox.ch/meeting-rooms/meeting-room-flory/), Meeting room Flory.

Location: 27, chemin des Crêts de Pregny - 1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva.

The workshop will be based around DSi's [WDSD 2017 Theme](https://worlddownsyndromeday.org/wdsd-2017) #MyVoiceMyCommunity and is open to all people with Down syndrome, families, and other interested persons.

**Side Event**

**#MyVoiceMyCommunity – Enabling people with Down syndrome to speak up, be heard and influence government policy and action, to be fully included in the community**

The Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations Geneva is hosting a side event to the UN Human Rights Council sessions on 22 March 2017 at the Palais des Nations, UN in Geneva, from 1-3pm. The event will comprise an "Open Dialogue" between people with Down syndrome and policy makers, which may include Mission representatives, as well as the UN Human Rights Council and members of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Location: Room XXIV, Building E, United Nations Office at Geneva, 8-14 avenue de la Paix, CH 1211 Geneva (See [MAP](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/%28httpAssets%29/88FFDD768F055AECC1256F2A0052A3CC/%24file/Palais%2Bdes%2BNations%2Bmap.pdf)).

Registration is mandatory to gain access to the UN campus.

[Register for Free Today](https://worlddownsyndromeday.org/world-down-syndrome-day-geneva-2017-myvoicemycommunity-registration-form)

**-END PRESS RELEASE-**

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**EDITOR’s NOTES:**

* Down Syndrome International (DSi) is a UK based international charity, comprising a membership of individuals and organisations from all over the world, committed to ensuring quality of life and human rights for all people with Down syndrome. Our members include people with Down syndrome, parents, family members and friends, carers, professionals, practitioners, researchers, organisations and people who are interested in Down syndrome.
* Down syndrome is a naturally occurring chromosomal arrangement that has always been a part of the human condition, being universally present across racial, gender or socio-economic lines, and affecting approximately 1 in 800 live births, although there is considerable variation worldwide. Down syndrome usually causes varying degrees of intellectual and physical disability and associated medical issues.
* There is estimated to be up to 7 million people who have Down syndrome living worldwide**.**
* **Background to #MyVoiceMyCommunity**

People with Down syndrome must be included and enabled to participate, on a full and equal basis with others, in all aspects of society. The reality for many is that prevailing negative attitudes result in low expectations, discrimination and exclusion, creating communities where people with Down syndrome cannot integrate successfully with others.

When people with Down syndrome and other disabilities are given opportunities to participate, all people benefit from this shared environment of friendship, acceptance and respect for everyone and high expectations are created.

People with Down syndrome and their advocates must be empowered to influence policy makers at all levels. People with Down syndrome may need additional support in specific areas of their lives such as health, education, work and employment, standard and choice of living accommodation, participation in political, public and cultural life, access to justice and recognition before the law. It is crucial when policies in these areas are formed and implemented, that people with Down syndrome who will be directly affected by them can directly influence their formation and implementation, to ensure their full and equal participation.

On World Down Syndrome Day, Tuesday 21 March 2017, join us to encourage people with Down syndrome and those who advocate for them to say “My Voice, My Community”, speak up, be heard and influence government policy and action, to ensure that they can be included, on a full and equal basis with others, in all aspects of society

* **About World Down Syndrome Day**

World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD), observed on 21 March every year, is a global awareness day which has been officially observed by the United Nations since 2012.

[Down Syndrome International (DSi)](http://www.ds-int.org/) encourages our friends all over the world to choose their own activities and events on WDSD to help raise awareness of what Down syndrome is, what it means to have Down syndrome, and how people with Down syndrome play a vital role in our lives and communities.

**Why March 21?**

The date for WDSD being the 21st day of the 3rd month, was selected to signify the uniqueness of the triplication (trisomy) of the 21st chromosome which causes Down syndrome.

**History of World Down Syndrome Day**

WDSD was first observed in 2006 in many countries around the world and Down Syndrome Association Singapore launched and hosted the WDSD website from 2006-2010, on behalf of DSi, for global activities to be recorded.

On 19 December 2011, the [United Nations General Assembly](http://www.worlddownsyndromeday.org/united-nations-resolution-world-down-syndrome-day) declared 21 March as World Down Syndrome Day. The General Assembly decided to "designate 21 March as World Down Syndrome Day, to be observed every year beginning in 2012" and "invites all Member States, relevant organizations of the United Nations system and other international organizations, as well as civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to observe World Down Syndrome Day in an appropriate manner, in order to raise public awareness of Down syndrome". Since 2012, Down Syndrome International organises a Conference at the UN Headquarters in New York to mark the date.

* **Geneva Event Sponsors**

The World Down Syndrome Day #MyVoiceMyCommunity event is sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations Geneva, International Disability Alliance and Inclusion International.

*Down Syndrome International*

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