His Excellency
António Guterres
Secretary-General
United Nations
New York, NY, 10017
United States

Excellency:

We have the honour to send this letter on behalf of the **Alliance of Italian Associations for Parkinson’s** – in coordination with the Canadian association PD Avengers, standing together to demand change in how the disease is seen and treated.1 We are writing to you inspired and encouraged by the role of the United Nations in creating a healthier, happier and more sustainable world. We are respectfully requesting that the United Nations consider observing 11 April as World Parkinson’s Day and the week in which 11 April occurs as Parkinson’s Awareness Week.

11 April is the anniversary of the 1755 birthday of James Parkinson. His published “Essay of Shaking Palsy” in 1817 was the first detailed look at the disease. 11 April has been marked as World Parkinson’s Day since 1997 to bring needed attention to this disease, which afflicts people without prejudice in every continent, ethnicity, race, colour, class and culture.2

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports, “The global burden of neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions is high, with approximately 70% of the burden in low- and middle-income countries. Neurological conditions are the leading cause of disability adjusted life years (DALYs) and the second leading cause of death globally, accounting for 9 million deaths per year.”3

WHO also declares Parkinson’s disease is the world’s fastest growing neurological condition.4

There is no cure.

Globally, more than 10 million people know they have the condition.5 Many more live with it, but without diagnosis due to the lack of access to a medical professional.

Parkinson’s is a misunderstood disease and lack of awareness makes people with Parkinson’s vulnerable and discriminated against. People with Parkinson’s earn less money, have difficulty obtaining and retaining employment despite qualifications and ability. They often have to retire early. Due to the symptoms of the disease, PwP’s are often mistaken for being intoxicated and in some countries are considered to be cursed by witches. Many PwP’s live in constant pain. They often lose their voice, their confidence, the luxury of sleep and their ability to control their automatic functions, their limbs and their future.

Additionally, the mainstream drug to help manage Parkinson’s is Levodopa. It was discovered before the crew of Apollo 11 reached the moon. Yet, there are thousands of people with Parkinson’s living in poverty across the world, sometimes making the brutal choice between food for their family and medication for themselves. With a prescription of levodopa, people with Parkinson’s can continue to work, be a partner, a parent and contribute to society.

World Parkinson’s Day is on 11 April. This year it also is the first day of Parkinson’s Awareness Week.

Today the United Nations does not recognise either the day or the week.6

We are humbly and respectfully requesting World Parkinson’s Day and Parkinson’s Awareness Week be added to the list of other causes the United Nations does currently observe on their days of recognition. Additionally, we are requesting each of the Member States of the United Nations to support our call.

The pledge of the United Nations is for “Peace, dignity and equality on a healthy planet.” We humbly request that you consider making the Parkinson’s community part of this pledge. To recognise World Parkinson’s Day and Parkinson’s Awareness Week would be a major step in raising awareness and reducing the vulnerability of people living with Parkinson’s disease.

Parkinson’s is a life sentence that is taking away our health. We should be grateful if you could support our call to keep our dignity and formally encourage the General Assembly to consider recognising 11 April as World Parkinson’s Day and the week of which it occurs Parkinson’s Awareness Week.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(*Signed*)**Alliance of Italian Associations for Parkinson’s**