



With breaking stories and
newswire products from

UN NEWS CENTRE



On International Day of Nowruz, UN officials call for renewed unity among cultures



Nowruz celebrations in Kabul, Afghanistan. Photo: UNAMA/Fardin Waez

21 March 2012 –

The spirit of peace and unity that lies at the core of Nowruz, the spring festival marking the Iranian New Year, is especially important at a time of global change and uncertainty, United Nations officials said today.

“My thoughts are with those communities observing Nowruz under difficult circumstances,” [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon said in his [message](#) to mark the day. “This holiday is a reminder that we share a common fate and must work for a better future for all.”

Originating in Iran's ancient history, Nowruz is celebrated by more than 300 million people worldwide on 21 March, the day of the spring equinox, which marks the sun's crossing of the Equator and the start of spring in the Northern Hemisphere.

In his message, Mr. Ban stressed that Nowruz serves as an opportunity to unite regions and nationalities, as well as religions and languages which celebrate the renewal of life on the first day of spring.

"Each Nowruz showcases the world's diversity and offers an opportunity for deepening the ties that bind us all together," Mr. Ban said. "It is a day to celebrate the value of mutual respect and the aspiration for harmony held by all societies."

The Nowruz holiday was recently added to the [*Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*](#) administered by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. In 2010, the UN General Assembly declared 21 March the International Day of Nowruz.

"For centuries, people from the Middle East and Central Asia have applied the Nowruz spirit to the dark challenges before them," the President of the General Assembly, Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, said in remarks delivered by the Acting President of the General Assembly, Uruguay's Ambassador José Luis Cancela, during an event on Tuesday evening to commemorate the occasion. "This noble tradition has been passed from generation to generation, with its deep philosophical heritage and message of universal humanitarian values."

Mr. Al-Nasser added that Nowruz served to emphasize the need for cooperation and dialogue to advance development, protect human rights, and ensure international peace and security.

"In establishing International Nowruz Day in 2010, Member States reaffirmed their ongoing commitment to dialogue among civilizations and to promoting solidarity, peace and prosperity," Mr. Al-Nasser said. "This spirit makes Nowruz far more than just a New Year celebration. It reminds us that, with seven billion people living on this planet, we must work together to build a truly united global partnership; a partnership in which all of humanity can advance and prosper."

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[Ban urges Alliance of Civilizations to fight extremism, promote tolerance](#)