



Message by the Secretary-General on the International Day of Nowruz, 21 March - "This special time of year brings different people from across a richly diverse region together for the annual festival of Nowruz, a celebration of the larger forces that unite us.

Marking a New Year with the first day of Spring, Nowruz is an age-old tradition in many countries of Western, Central and South Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkans and beyond.

Nowruz engenders a vast array of cultural expressions. Celebratory rites can take the form of horseracing, traditional wrestling, songs in various languages, tales about the mythological King Jamshid, or lighting candles in front of homes. These different manifestations of the spirit of Nowruz carry the same message of human solidarity.

An impressive range of countries sponsored the successful initiative to inscribe Nowruz on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. That joint effort of Azerbaijan, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan itself proved the value of unity in diversity.

Nowruz does more than bring countries together; it reminds us to cherish the planet we share. By highlighting the beauty of nature and the renewal of springtime, Nowruz can inspire celebrants and onlookers alike to practice greater environmental stewardship.

On this International Day of Nowruz, I offer my best wishes to those who celebrate, and express hope that all people can use the occasion to reflect on the beauty of nature, the promise of Spring and the power of culture to build peace."

Ban Ki-moon

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