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Secretary-General marks first International Day for Nowruz with call for peace



21 March 2010 – Celebrating the first-ever United Nations International Day of Nowruz, the spring festival of Persian origin, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today appealed to people around the world to draw on the holiday's rich history to promote peace and goodwill.

Last month, the General Assembly voted to recognize Nowruz – which means 'new day' in the Farsi language – annually on 21 March, the day of the vernal equinox.

Marking the sun's crossing of the Equator and the start of spring in the Northern Hemisphere, Nowruz is celebrated by more than 300 million people worldwide as the beginning of the new year.

For more than three millennia, people in the Balkans, the Black Sea Basin, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East, among other regions, have observed Nowruz through their own special traditions.

“These rituals, from repainting homes to visiting friends to preparing symbolic meals, are infused with a spirit of renewal and can inspire not only those conducting them but all people,” Mr. Ban said in his message to commemorate the International Day.

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