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## Mandela embodies UN's highest values, Ban says



Nelson Mandela

18 July 2009 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon celebrated the 91st birthday of Nelson Mandela today, calling the founding president of post-apartheid South Africa and Nobel Peace Prize laureate an “exemplary global citizen.”

“He inspired people across the world, and across the generations,” Mr. Ban said at an event to commemorate Mandela Day in New York, paying tribute to his contributions to a “democratic, multi-racial South Africa” and his continued tireless efforts to promote peace and human dignity worldwide.

“Indeed, Nelson Mandela is a living embodiment of the highest values of the United Nations.”

The Secretary-General spoke of Mr. Mandela's ability to inspire, pointing out that “many people, facing tribulations of their own, have found both solace and fortitude in his example. Above all, he has shown the difference one person can make in the face of injustice, conflict, poverty and disease.”

At today's celebration, also attended by schoolchildren from South Africa and New York, Mr. Ban recalled a meeting with Mr. Mandela earlier this year.

“I took the opportunity to thank him for everything he has done for his fellow South Africans and for all of us,” the Secretary-General said. “But he didn't want to hear my praise. He insisted that everything he had accomplished had been done not by him, but by countless others, many of whom he had never met.”

Mr. Mandela's humility is a reflection of “leadership of the highest order,” Mr. Ban stressed.

“May we all continue to benefit from his wisdom, his good works and good humour for many years to come,” he added.

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