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## UN honours former anti-apartheid leader on first-ever Nelson Mandela Day



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (right) and his wife, Yoo Soon-taek (left), meet with Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa

16 July 2010 – The United Nations is marking Nelson Mandela International Day for the first time this year in honour of the former South African leader's contribution to the struggle for peace and freedom.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said he was most impressed by Mr. Mandela's humility when he met the former anti-apartheid leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

Mr. Mandela preferred to talk not about himself but about what other people had done in the struggle for human rights and dignity, Mr. Ban said in a message to a special commemorative ceremony held at UN Headquarters in New York.

"That is just one reason why Nelson Mandela is such an inspiration to millions. He was not backed by money or power. As he constantly reminds us, he is an ordinary man. But he has achieved extraordinary things.

"Nelson Mandela's accomplishments came at great personal cost to himself and his family. His sacrifice not only served the people of his own nation, South Africa, but made the world a better place for all people, everywhere," said the Secretary-General.

The General Assembly overwhelmingly decided in November 2009 to declare 18 July, Mr. Mandela's birthday, as the "Nelson Mandela International Day" to commemorate his long-standing commitment to promoting conflict resolution, race relations, human rights, reconciliation and gender equality.

The Assembly's President, Ali Treki, said that the celebration of the Day should also serve to remind the international community of the imperative for social equality and justice and the pursuit of peace through dialogue.

"It is a call to action to make the world a better place, one day at a time," he stated in a message to today's ceremony.

Among the events taking place around the globe to mark the Day is a "football for peace" tournament in Sudan, as well as photo exhibitions, film screenings, panel discussions and music programmes in a number of countries.

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**UN honours Nelson Mandela with International Day on 18 July**