



Remarks

by

H.E. Ambassador John W. Ashe

President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

General Assembly

On the

International Day of Nowruz

Delivered by H.E. Mrs. Aksoltan Ataeva

Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan

New York

24 March 2014

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Trusteeship Council Chamber (15.30 p.m.)

On behalf of the President of the 68th Session of the General Assembly

H.E. Dr. John W. Ashe

Excellencies,
Under-Secretary-General,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Due to unexpected circumstances, the President is unable to join us today and I am honoured to read a statement on his behalf.

Today we commemorate the International Day of Nowruz. On this occasion, we welcome the arrival of spring and celebrate the renewing of life at the end of winter. And I am sure that after a very long and cold winter, all of us here in New York are particularly excited for this year's celebration.

Let me begin by extending my appreciation to the Permanent Missions of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for bringing us together for this celebration. This impressive list of Asian nations demonstrates the diversity of peoples and cultures that celebrate and revere the tradition of Nowruz.

Originating in the Persian culture, Nowruz marks the beginning of the New Year for over 300 million people from the Balkans to the Black Sea Basin, from the Caucasus to the Middle East. Spanning across several regions and cultures from East to West, bringing together diverse peoples around shared customs and traditions, Nowruz illustrates how our world cultural heritage can foster mutual understanding across borders and strengthen global peace.

The United Nations has long recognised the unique contributions of cultures and civilizations to the enrichment of humankind. Last year, we marked the 10th anniversary of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In 2009 UNESCO added Nowruz to the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and in 2010 the General Assembly established 21 March as the International Day of Nowruz. Resolution 64/253 calls on Member States to raise awareness and share information on this festivity, and to organize and partake in events that commemorate it. In our gathering today, we honour that commitment.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,

For millennia, Nowruz has brought together friends and families around music, dance and festive meals on the day of the vernal equinox. Anchored in the cycles of nature, Nowruz celebrates life in harmony with nature and reminds us of the intimate connection between humankind and our environment.

As we begin crafting the contours of a new agenda for the post 2015 era, the celebration of Nowruz illustrates the many ways in which culture can contribute to sustainable development. To further explore the linkages between culture and the three pillars of sustainable development, the General Assembly has mandated a thematic debate on 5 May entitled Culture and sustainable development in the post 2015 development agenda. I encourage all Member States to participate at the highest possible level, along with other stakeholders, to explore how we can maximize the contributions of culture in a new development paradigm.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The International Day of Nowruz is the joyful celebration of a new season. It is also an opportunity to reflect on the relationship between humans and nature, which as we all know, is increasingly facing mounting pressure. So today as we celebrate the promise of spring, let us also remember that we, the human family,

are called to renew our bonds of solidarity and to restore harmony with the planet we all share.

Happy Nowruz one and all!