

20 March 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Nowruz event**

Delivered on behalf of the President of the General Assembly

**Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am pleased to deliver this message on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, as we mark the celebration of Nowruz.

I would like to thank the Permanent Missions of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for organizing this event in celebration of Nowruz and in doing so, inspiring us to share its powerful message of peace and hope.

For centuries, people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds across the Asian continent and other regions of the world have marked Nowruz and the changing of the seasons. Through these celebrations, Nowruz has not only symbolized the start of spring and the renewal of life, but it has also represented an important message of respect, mutual understanding and peace.

Indeed, the celebration of Nowruz has been passed on from one generation to the next, and represents a unique tradition that transcends many cultural, ethnic and religious boundaries. For many around the world, Nowruz is a joyful reminder of the common human values that unite us all.

Given the profound and complex challenges that exist in many of our societies today, the important message of peace and the collective interest in the common good represented by Nowruz is as important as ever.

We need louder messages of peaceful co-existence to reverberate around the world. I will be convening a High-Level Thematic Debate on Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation, on 21-22 April, 2015.

The debate, which is being organized in conjunction with the Secretary-General and the UN Alliance of Civilizations, will provide an opportunity for Member States and faith leaders, along with other stakeholders, to share experiences and to address key issues and challenges relating to the promotion of tolerance and reconciliation. Together, we will explore solutions for countering violent extremism with the aim of promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

Thank you for your attention and happy Nowruz to one and all.