

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF NOWRUZ**

**Kabul, 27 March 2014**

It is a pleasure to convey greetings to all who have come here today for the annual commemoration of Nowruz.

Nowruz is a special occasion. It is a time for renewal. It promotes the values of peace and solidarity between generations and communities. It contributes to cultural diversity and friendship among peoples.

We at the United Nations and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan send our best wishes on this holiday and express our hope that the coming year will bring prosperity and harmony to the Afghan people.

From rural villages to communities across the country, throughout Central Asia, the Middle East, the Caucasus and many other regions, the Nowruz festivities bring families, friends and neighbours together to observe a wondrous array of customs and traditions.

This year's celebration comes on the eve of a critical moment in Afghanistan's transition: the presidential and parliamentary elections, now just over a week away.

Inclusive and credible elections that result in a stable transfer of authority will provide strong testimony to the progress that Afghanistan has made. These elections are a critical benchmark in Afghanistan's transition, and can be an achievement all Afghans can be proud of. Like Nowruz, successful elections can reinforce a sense of community and national unity.

The United Nations has condemned the recent deliberate attacks on Afghan civilians, including the deadly attack on an IEC office in Kabul. These brave electoral officials were helping to support your democratic right to vote and we hope that, despite the violence, Afghans will not be deterred from exercising this right.

We encourage candidates and their supporters to respect the electoral process, the independence of electoral institutions and the outcome, so as to sustain the progress that Afghanistan has made.

Nowruz has traditionally been an opportunity to strengthen ties among peoples and unite different ethnicities, cultures and backgrounds. A united, stable and prosperous state

Afghanistan can be a powerful force for good, not only for its own people, but for its immediate neighbours and the broader region.

The United Nations welcomes the support of Afghanistan's regional partners in its continued development and strongly encourages the reinforcement and expansion of these vital links. The United Nations remains dedicated to supporting these efforts through its mandated role to provide support to regional cooperation.

Afghanistan's history with the United Nations dates back to the early days of the Organization, having become a member in 1946. We have had a long-standing presence in the country for many years, working hand in hand with you to meet political and developmental challenges.

We remain strongly committed to maintaining a long-term partnership with Afghanistan after this crucial year of transition and as our ties continue to evolve to meet Afghanistan's current and future needs.

Nowruz represents a new beginning. Let us take this opportunity to collectively reject violence and strengthen our resolve to continue the hard work towards peace, prosperity and human rights in Afghanistan and around the world.

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