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Message from Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

on the occasion of the *International Day of Nowruz*

21 March 2013

Nowruz marks the New Year and the arrival of spring across many countries of Western, Central and Southern Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkans and other regions. This celebration carries a message of peace for all peoples.

This was recognized when Nowruz was inscribed in 2009 on UNESCO's *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*. It was reflected in 2010, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution recognizing 21 March as the *International Day of Nowruz*.

Nowruz is an age-old celebration of rebirth. It is a moment when societies pause to strengthen the ties of respect and solidarity that bring together peoples of different cultures, religions and languages. This is a celebration of harmony in diversity and with nature. It is a time for families and friends, and for societies as a whole to join around rituals and traditions that enshrine the values of peace and tolerance. Nowruz is a moment for renewing with the past and for strengthening forms of belonging that are essential for a better future for all.

At this time of great change, Nowruz is a reminder of the values and aspirations that bind us all together, in mutual understanding, solidarity and peace.

On this day, I am delighted to express my best wishes to all those around the world who are celebrating Nowruz.

Irina Bokova