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**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,  
Director-General of UNESCO,  
on the occasion of the International Day of Nowruz**

**21 March 2018**

For a large part of humanity, the first day of spring also marks the beginning of a new year. Today, not only in many countries in Asia and the Caucasus, but also all around the world, millions of families are celebrating Nowruz, continuing a tradition that dates back thousands of years.

Since it signifies a new beginning, Nowruz is also a festival that is filled with hope, as expressed in the gentle and elegant words of the Persian poet Hafez: "Springtime is here again/With the charm of roses./Look at their fresh cheeks/And the bitter plant of sadness/Will be uprooted from your heart". The fires that are lit at Nowruz in the Iranian countryside, on the northern plains of Iraq and on the beaches of Los Angeles burn up the bad luck and suffering of the previous year and carry the promise of future joy and a more peaceful world.

UNESCO gladly joins this promise and these festivities. Nowruz celebrations take different forms depending on the region of the world you are lucky enough to attend them in, making them a perfect demonstration of the diversity and inventiveness of human cultures. In this respect, they remind us that our common heritage, whose preservation and dissemination is UNESCO's mission, does not only concern monuments, objects and landscapes, but also practices, beliefs, knowledge and traditions, an intangible heritage which is just as precious and sometimes more fragile, since it relies solely on memory and transmission.

Happy Nowruz to everyone!