

**Address by Amb. Vaqif Sadiqov,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

at International Day of Nowruz

**Palais des Nations
Geneva, 21 March 2017**

Director-General Michael Møller,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a privilege for me to warmly welcome all of you at this event dedicated to Nowruz – a holiday of a new year’s arrival – on behalf of the Permanent Missions of the following Member States, which jointly organize this event: the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Albania, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Iraq, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey, Turkmenistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Nowruz is celebrated by more than 300 million people on the day of the astronomical vernal equinox, which usually occurs on the 21st of March, and marks the first day of spring. It has its origins in the pre-Islamic religion of Zoroastrianism, and has been celebrated for over 3000 years in the Balkans, Black Sea region, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East, and other regions.

In 2009, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization passed the decision to include Nowruz in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. On the 23rd of February 2010, the UN General Assembly Resolution A/64/L.30/Rev.2 welcomed the decision of the UNESCO, and recognized the 21st of March as the International Day of Nowruz, and invited the United Nations and its specialized agencies, funds and programmes, and the interested international and regional organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations, to participate in events organized by the Member States where Nowruz is celebrated.

In this regard, I would like to thank H.E. Mr. Michael Møller, the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, and his very professional staff, as well as my distinguished colleagues from the Permanent Missions – co-organizers of this event, for their support and cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Nowruz as the embodiment of the unity of cultural heritage and centuries-long traditions continues to play a significant role in strengthening ties among peoples based on mutual understanding and the ideals of peace and good neighbourliness. Traditions and rituals of Nowruz with themes important to all humanity reflect the features of ancient cultural customs of civilizations of East and West, which came into being through the interchange of diversities and values, reminding all of us of the importance of a genuine dialogue among civilizations.

Nowruz highlights the affirmation of life in harmony with nature, the awareness of inseparable links between natural cycles of renewal and respectful attitude towards sources of life. Nowruz has always been a day for family and friends, for festive meals and sweets, for dancing and singing. Millions of people are celebrating the arrival of a new year and new opportunities. Nowruz creates the spirit of harmonious peace, productive labour, and mutual respect, and this is what the United Nations is all about.

Therefore, today is the time to leave gloomy, cold weather behind and celebrate the awakening of nature.

Thank you.