



21 March 2015 – The ancestral festivity of [Nowruz](#) marks the first day of spring and renewal of nature in the northern hemisphere, but on today's [International Day of Forests and the Tree](#) (IDFT) United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon underlines that “to build a [sustainable, climate-resilient](#) future for all, we must invest in our world's forests”. In addition, Mr Ban also stressed the importance of “building a world of justice and equality”, as the United Nations mark both the [International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#) (IDERD) as [World Down Syndrome Day](#) (WDSD).

While we fight racial discrimination every day throughout the year, the United Nations mark today as "an opportunity to renew our commitment to building a world of justice and equality where xenophobia and bigotry do not exist."

This year's IDERD theme stresses the need to explore the root causes of racial discrimination and learn the lessons history has provided in order to [combat racism today](#) .

"Lasting peace can only be built on the premise that all people have equal rights and dignity - regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, social or other status", continued Mr Ban.

Social inclusion for everyone

But on today's [World Down Syndrome Day](#) , we shouldn't ignore that discrimination presents itself under many disguises.

"Persons with [Down syndrome](#) face stigmatization, abuse and lack of support. Too often, their challenges begin early in life when they are excluded from quality education systems."

A new spring, a new Nowruz

Peace and solidarity are also the central focus of the annual festivity of [Nowruz](#) , celebrated for over 3,000 years by over 300 million people worldwide on the day of the astronomical vernal equinox.

According to [UNESCO Director-General Bokova](#) "these messages are especially important today, in this turning point year for the Millennium Development Goals and as States shape a [new global sustainable development agenda](#) . The intangible cultural heritage of humanity is a wellspring of confidence and belonging – it is a source of strength and creativity for the benefit of all."

International Day of Forests and the Tree

In this year of [sustainable development](#) , today's [International Day of Forests and the Tree](#) focuses on climate change to raise awareness of the importance of types of forests and trees outside forests.

“Forests are on the front lines of climate change”, stated Ban Ki-moon in his official message for the day, adding that “these ecosystems, rich with biodiversity, are increasingly vulnerable to changes in weather, temperature and rainfall patterns. It is essential, therefore, that we work to preserve and sustainably manage our forests.”

“Sustaining healthy forests and [mitigating and adapting](#) to climate change are two sides of the same coin.”



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