

**Remarks by Ambassador Khusrav Noziri,
ECO Secretary General at Nowruz Ceremony
ECI, Tehran, 13 March 2023**

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear guests,**

It is my great honor and privilege to welcome you to this very important ceremony being organized to celebrate the festive occasion of Nowruz.

Having no doubt that our distinguished guests are very well conversant with Nowruz, its shared and extensive celebrations in our region, I would like to recall what it is, for general understanding.

In Persian language, Nowruz literally means “New Day” that marks the beginning of the spring. It is celebrated on the day of the astronomical vernal equinox, inaugurating the Persian month of Farvardin which occurs on the 21st of March.

Nowruz is possibly the most ancient New Year celebration on the Earth. Its roots are lost in the depths of millennia. That is why even the eminent luminaries such as Biruni and Khayyam had to resort to the language of legends in order to explain its origins. In the Iranian tradition the establishment of Nowruz is attributed to Jamshid, a legendary king of seven continents and the most glorious epic hero as well.

On Nowruz Day Haft Sīn table like one which you can see in this room is arranged. Haft Sīn or the Seven Sīns is a significant part in the tradition of celebrating Nowruz. The Haft Sīn table includes seven specific items starting with the letter Sīn (س) in the Persian alphabet:

- *Sabza* - sprouted wheat grass - symbolizing rebirth and renewal of nature;
- *Sumanak* - wheat pudding - symbolizing fertility and the sweetness of life;
- *Sanjid* - sweet dried fruit of Persian olive - symbolizing love and affection;
- *Sīr* - garlic - symbolizing good health;
- *Sēb* - apple - symbolizing health and beauty;
- *Sipand* - seeds of wild rue - symbolizing the sunrise and the spice of life;
- *Sirka* - vinegar - symbolizing patience and age.

Among these Seven Sīns Sumanak has a special place. It is a sweet paste made entirely from germinated wheat which is prepared especially for Nowruz in a large pot. This practice has been traced back to the very ancient time. By the way a special corner for Sumanak has been arranged in this hall and we invite you to taste this symbol of fertility and sweetness of life.

Nowruz is a universal festival. It is celebrated as the beginning of the New Year by millions of people around the world. Nowruz transcends national borders, religious divides and other differences to unite communities with bonds of goodwill.

That is why Nowruz was registered on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by the UNESCO in 2009 and in the following year the United Nations General Assembly on the initiative of group of countries, who were at the same time the ECO Member States, recognized March 21st as the International Day of Nowruz.

Celebration of Nowruz as the beginning of the New Year is not just a sign of renewal of Nature; it is also a time of change and hope. It is an opportunity to reflect on intimate links between the peoples and the natural world.

It carries a strong message of peace and harmony between peoples of all cultures based on mutual respect and understanding. In this context, ECO Region is very unique as the benevolence, harmony and peaceful coexistence are its in-built and core values.

Nowruz is an occasion to strengthen our resolution to leave no one behind in our journey for a better future.

In conclusion let me crown my short reflections on Nowruz with the verse of Adam of Poets Rudaki who praised that festivity more than a millennium ago:

*A lush spring has arrived, colorful and effervescent,
With thousands of delights and decorations.
It is fair that the old man becomes young.
In a world that supplants old age with youth.*

Which sounds in the original as follows:

آمد بهار خرم با رنگ و بوی طیب
با صد هزار نزهت و آرایش عجیب
شاید که مرد پیر بدین گه شود جوان
گیتی بدیل یافت شباب از پی مشیب

Happy Nowruz to everyone!