

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON THE DEATH OF NELSON MANDELA
5 December 2013

Nelson Mandela was a singular figure on the global stage -- a man of quiet dignity and towering achievement, a giant for justice and a down-to-earth human inspiration.

I am profoundly saddened by his passing. On behalf of the United Nations, I extend my deepest condolences to the people of South Africa and especially to Nelson Mandela's family and loved ones.

Many around the world were greatly influenced by his selfless struggle for human dignity, equality and freedom. He touched our lives in deeply personal ways. At the same time, no one did more in our time to advance the values and aspirations of the United Nations.

Nelson Mandela devoted his life to the service of his people and humanity, and he did so at great personal sacrifice. His principled stance and the moral force that underpinned it were decisive in dismantling the system of apartheid.

Remarkably, he emerged from 27 years of detention without rancor, determined to build a new South Africa based on dialogue and understanding. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission established under his leadership remains a model for achieving justice in societies confronting a legacy of human rights abuses.

In the decades-long fight against apartheid, the United Nations stood side-by-side with Nelson Mandela and all those in South Africa who faced unrelenting racism and discrimination. His 1994 address to the General Assembly as the first democratically elected President of a free South Africa was a defining moment. The Assembly has declared 18 July, his birthday, "Nelson Mandela International Day", an annual observance on which we recognize and seek to build on his contributions to promoting a culture of peace and freedom around the world.

I was privileged to meet Nelson Mandela in 2009. When I thanked him for his life's work, he insisted the credit belonged to others. I was very moved by his selflessness and deep sense of shared purpose.

Nelson Mandela showed what is possible for our world and within each one of us -- if we believe, dream and work together.

Let us continue each day to be inspired by his lifelong example and his call to never cease working for a better and more just world.