

UNITED NATIONS



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SPEECH AND OFFICIAL LAUNCH

UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL DAY OF NON-VIOLENCE

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UNITED NATIONS RESIDENT COORDINATOR
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FOR MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE & BRUNEI

**2 OCTOBER 2017
5.00 PM
KUALA LUMPUR**

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Mr. Sree Harry Nadarajah, Chairman of the Gandhi Memorial Trust,

The Board of Trustees of the Gandhi Memorial Trust,

Excellencies,

Honourable Judges,

Tan Sri-Tan Sri, Puan Sri-Puan Sri, Datuk-Datuk, Datin-Datin,

Distinguished guests:

It's just 100-days since I've taken up office in your beautiful and peaceful country. And it is an honour and privilege to be invited to launch this commemoration of the United Nations International Day of Non-violence by the Gandhi Memorial Trust; and to address this august gathering.

History

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2017 marks the 10th year of the establishment of the International Day of Non-Violence, through a UN General Assembly resolution that was supported by 140 countries, reflecting the universal respect for Mahatma Gandhi and the enduring universal relevance of his thinking and philosophy. And this special day is commemorated to keep alive our collective resolve to promote a culture of peace and to remember that non-violence, tolerance, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, democracy, development, and respect for diversity are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

As we know, Mahatma Gandhi embodied these values. They are core to humanity and to building a just and equitable world. They form the very foundation of the

Charter of the United Nations, where the resolve to “practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours” is seen a prerequisite

- To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war;
- To reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women; and
- To promote social progress and better standards of living in larger freedom.

In 2015, these values and interlinkages were further reinforced via the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its implementation framework, the Sustainable Development Goals that I will elaborate on, later in my speech.

Nonviolence in current context

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The UN has done much over the past 70 years to improve lives and maintain peace and harmony among nations. While inter-state conflicts have generally declined, we now live in times, where conflicts and violence are increasingly carried out within countries, with perpetrators acting in less predictable ways that defy conventional responses and require new strategies.

Hereby, violence is often the symptom or the consequence of underlying fault lines of the social fabric that are caused by the lack of tolerance and lack of respect of diversity. I see worrying trends today around the world, where the differences between “us” and “the other” are again exploited, be it by over-emphasizing national interest, ethnic, or religious identity. The feeling of superiority of one group over another, of one belief system over another, of one ethnicity over another, and of gender bias - the unwillingness to accept diversity

and adopt the principles of equality and human rights – are the root causes of violence and human suffering of our times.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As expounded by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, just last week, the situation in Myanmar has turned into the world's fastest developing refugee emergency and a humanitarian and human rights nightmare. More than 500,000 children, women and men have had to flee their homes under intolerable circumstances.

A durable solution must be found not only in Myanmar but also in Syria, South Sudan and other parts of the world that are today paralysed by violence that reveals itself in different shapes and forms. Lasting peace can only be found if the warring sides choose tolerance, equality, and respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the other.

SDGs

Two years ago, 193 countries committed themselves to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a view to transforming our world. Its implementation framework, the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs, is a comprehensive roadmap that brings the social, environmental and economic dimensions together toward ensuring improved quality of lives, especially for those furthest behind, and a peaceful and sustainable world for present and future generations.

Peaceful and inclusive societies

Underpinning these aspirations are the key elements of Goal 16 to *“Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to*

justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels". The message of the universally accepted SDG framework is that peaceful and inclusive societies are a prerequisite of development and that we have to actively work on making them flourish. To this end the SDGs lay out concrete targets that comprise the promotion of the rule of law; effective, accountable and transparent institutions; inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making; public access to information, and the protection of fundamental freedoms. This has not only been acknowledged, but was committed to be implemented by all 193 UN member states that adopted the SDGs in 2015.

Protection of harmony and cultural diversity

Embedded across the goals and targets of the SDGs, are Gandhi's aspirations for a world where the dignity of all is respected; where people of all cultures and beliefs live together, valued as equals. As you may be aware, Malaysia recently hosted the mission of the UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights, Ms Karima Bennoune, who, while acknowledging the efforts Malaysia has made in rising to the challenge of building a society inclusive of its broad cultural diversity, also spoke about the need for Malaysia to protect its tradition of tolerance. The harmony and peace that is enjoyed between the different cultures and ethnicities, is indeed something that Malaysians can be proud of, but it should not be taken for granted and therefore all efforts must be made to safeguard the remarkable gains that have been made over the years.

Non-violence applies also to nature and the environment

We know that a culture of non-violence begins with respect for others, but it does not end there. To nurture peace, we also must respect nature. In all he did, Gandhi honoured our obligation to all living things. He reminded us that "Earth provides enough to satisfy everyone's needs, but not everyone's greed."

Hence, half a century before the dawn of the MDGs, Rio+20 and SDGs, Gandhi was already a champion of the environment and sustainability. Today, as we realize more than ever before that our developmental gains have come about at the expense of environmental degradation, almost half of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, relate to the protection of the environment, flora and fauna, and climate change.

Our quest for durable solutions to peace is closely linked to the understanding that our natural resources – the complex ecosystems of living beings, land, water, air – are finite and that all efforts need to be made to regain the balance between economic development and environmental protection, so that our children have an equal chance to live a healthy and fulfilling life.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The decision for non-violence in the face of violence, requires an innate strength of character and will. It requires immense courage to stand up to those who embrace violence as a means to force their beliefs and will upon others; and to demand peaceful negotiations. Mahatma Gandhi has inspired many leaders and movements across the world to adopt non-violent means to achieve social and political goals.

I commend the Gandhi Memorial Trust for its efforts to commemorate this important day of non-violence every year, on the 2nd of October in conjunction with Gandhi's birthday – as the occasion provides us an opportunity to be reminded of and to promote Gandhi's important legacy of non-violence that is so fundamentally linked to the international agenda of peace, development and human rights.

I would also like to recognise the Gandhi Memorial Trust for its important contributions to social development. In addition to promoting a culture of non-violence and peace, the Trust also contributes to enhancing education, nutrition, and health for the underprivileged. It also strives to promote partnerships and encourage the public to be part of their efforts alleviate poverty and illiteracy. These are contributions to a future where no one will be left behind. They are also in line with Mahatma Gandhi's teaching to "be the change we wish to see in the world".

I congratulate all of you at the occasion of the International Day of Non-violence and end with a quote from UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, "We want the world our children inherit to be defined by the values enshrined in the UN Charter: peace, justice, respect, human rights, tolerance, and solidarity."

Thank you.