

*Your Excellency High Commissioner of India to Singapore— Mr P Kumaran*

*Chairman and Co-Founder of Global Schools Foundation— Mr. Atul Temurnikar*

*President of Global Organization of People of Indian Origin Singapore— Mr Harikrishnan*

*Advisor of GOPIO— Mr Iqbal Jumabhoy*

*First Secretary of the Indian High Commission— Ms Saswati Dey*

*Principal, Teachers, Students of GIIS, Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen, Good Morning!*

It is indeed a great pleasure and a great honour for the United Nations Association of Singapore to be present here, to mark the birth of Mahatma Gandhi and to commemorate the International Day of Non-Violence 2022.

This is an important occasion to disseminate the message of non-violence, through education and public awareness. We must be resolute in reaffirming the universal relevance of the principle of non-violence and the urgent need to secure a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding, and non-violence.

It doesn't take much to recognize how violent our world has become. Real-life stories involving violence are everywhere— on the news, on the Internet, in our social media feeds. Violence is growing.

Each year, over 1.6 million people worldwide lose their lives to violence. Around the globe, violence is among the leading causes of death for people aged 15 to 44. For every person who dies as a result of violence, many more are injured and suffer from a range of physical, sexual, reproductive and mental health problems.

Now, let's take a step back to review our collective progress in promoting non-violence. The International Day of Peace started in 1981 by the United Nations resolution that encourages "all humanity to commit to Peace above all differences and to contribute to building a Culture of Peace." Twenty years later, the UN General Assembly unanimously deemed 2nd October a 24-hour period of cease-fire and non-violence in an effort to promote unity and peace.

Global peace is the Summum Bonum, the supreme ideal. It is a noble and necessary pursuit, and the only practical pathway to a better, fairer world for all people.

Yet in too many places, in too many contexts, we are failing the cause of peace. We fail to understand peace in its various dimensions— personal, social, national, and international— and how intertwined these dimensions are to each other.

Peace is more than an absence of war. Of course, a certain degree of peace will be achieved by removing all kinds of violence such as war, environmental destruction, violation of human rights, cruelty against women and children, exploitation and oppression of the weak, poor and illiterate. But peace is not merely a state of non-violence or absence of wars. Peace is an attainment of positivity in each human being. It means dignity and well-being for all. And through peace, we have the opportunities to create a better future.

The Global Peace Index reported that we have a less peaceful world in the last decade. This is our wake up call. What can we do as a society?

Reports from UNESCO & the Global Peace Index have shown that intercultural dialogues play a significant part in building sustainable peace. 89% of all conflicts globally occur in countries with low intercultural dialogue. If we can put aside intolerance and prejudice, and instead, promote intercultural dialogues, peace, economic development and global stability would be closer to our reach. Intercultural dialogue may sound like another buzzword in this world full of noises. But what we are trying to do here is to essentially talk.

Yes, it is that simple. But at the same time, it's difficult. It is about listening as much as it is about expressing our views. It is about maintaining peaceful behaviour as much as it is about championing our causes.

The theme of this year's International Day of Peace — “End Racism, Build Peace” — reminds us of the many ways racism poisons people's hearts and minds, and erodes the peace we all seek.

Racism robs people of their rights and dignity. It inflames inequalities and mistrusts. And it pushes people apart, at a time when all of us should be coming together, as one human family, to repair this fractured world. The world that is ours.

Instead of fighting each other, we should be working to defeat our true enemies: racism, poverty, inequality, conflict, the climate crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.

We should tear down structures that sustain racism, and lift up human rights movements everywhere. And we should drown out the vicious voices of hate speech with a united and sustained cry for truth, understanding and mutual respect.

On this important day, a time of observing 24 hours of non-violence and cease-fire, we renew our call for all people to do more than just laying down their weapons.

We call on them to re-affirm the bonds of solidarity we share as human beings and to get down to the business of building a better, more peaceful world.

We may never be strong enough to be entirely non-violent in thoughts, words and deeds. But we must keep non-violence as our goal and make consequential progress towards it. As arduous as this challenge sounds, we have each other, and in fact, we have to rely on each other to create a more peaceful, resilient and equitable world, one capable of facing the myriad challenges that lie ahead.

We wish all of you a meaningful and fruitful commemoration of International day of Non-Violence.

Thank you.