



**INTRODUCTION OF THE DRAFT RESOLUTION ON 'INTERNATIONAL DAY OF NON-VIOLENCE' ` BY MR. ANAND SHARMA, MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AT THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON JUNE 15, 2007**

Madam Chairperson,

I have the honour to introduce, under Agenda Item 44, the draft resolution contained in document A/61/L.62, entitled "International Day of Non-Violence". Apart from the 114 co-sponsors named in the L.62 document, I have the pleasure to inform that a further 26 Member States have also joined as co-sponsors, giving this draft resolution a total of 140 co-sponsors.

Madam Chairperson,

The idea of promoting such a resolution originated from the Declaration adopted at the international conference on "Peace, Non-Violence and Empowerment - Gandhian Philosophy in the 21st Century" convened in New Delhi in January this year to commemorate the centenary of the *Satyagraha* Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa. Attended by representative leadership delegations of 91 countries and 122 organisations besides many eminent personalities, including philosophers and Nobel laureates, the participants in that Conference solemnly vowed to nurture the values espoused by Mahatma Gandhi and articulated the collective yearning for a new way forward to address the problems of hunger and dehumanising poverty, which continue to plague humanity, to build a just and equitable world where people live with dignity and in peace and harmony with each other in diverse and pluralistic societies.

Madam Chairperson,

The wide and diverse co-sponsorship of this draft resolution reflects the universal respect that Mahatma Gandhi commands and the enduring relevance of his humane philosophy. In his own words, "Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man". His "novel mode of mass mobilisation and non-violent action" brought down colonialism, strengthened the roots of popular sovereignty, of civil, political and economic rights, and greatly influenced many a freedom struggle and inspired leaders like Badshah Khan, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr. and many others.

This draft resolution seeks to declare Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary, October 2, as the International Day of Non-Violence. By doing so, we would be highlighting the holistic nature and the continued relevance of the Mahatma's message for our times, indeed for all times to come. It encompasses the rejection of violence against oneself, against others, against other groups, against other societies and against nature. Non violence, in his own words, "has no room for cowardice or even weakness". It also "necessitates complete abstention from exploitation in any form".

Madam Chairperson,

The draft resolution before the General Assembly is simple but significant. Tabled under the agenda item 'Culture of Peace', it reaffirms in its preambular paragraphs the universal relevance of the principle of non-violence and seeks to secure a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding and non-violence. Vide its first Operative Paragraph it decides to observe and celebrate October 2 every year as the International Day of Non-Violence. Its second Operative paragraph invites all Member States, the UN system, regional and non-governmental organisations, to commemorate the day in an appropriate manner and disseminate the message of non-violence, including through education and public awareness. It also requests the UN Secretary-General to recommend ways to assist Member States in organising activities to commemorate the Day, to take necessary measures to observe the Day by the UN system, and to keep the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the UN General Assembly informed about the implementation within the UN system of the present resolution as regards the observance of the International Day of Non-Violence.

Madam Chairperson,

Promoting the principle of non-violence in such a focussed manner would, it is hoped, significantly contribute to the realisation of the goals set out in the 1999 UN Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. The designation of October 2 as "International Day of Non-Violence" would also advance the implementation of the goals of the International Decade for Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World [2001-2010].

Madam Chairperson,

While concluding, I would like to thank each and every one of our co-sponsors and supporters for helping us pilot this resolution at the UN General Assembly. It is also the hope of the co-sponsors that this draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson

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