



• Yoga and the UN •
Culture of Peace



The Permanent Mission of
Nepal to the United Nations

YOGA AND THE UNITED NATIONS CULTURE OF PEACE PROGRAM

Celebrate Earth: Sustainable Living, Meditation and Yoga UN Headquarters, 19 May 2017

Concept Note

Coplanet International, with the sponsorship of the Permanent Mission of Nepal to the United Nations, is organizing an international conference entitled “**Celebrate Earth: Sustainable Living, Meditation and Yoga**” at the United Nations Headquarters in 19 May 2017. This event will be a continuation of the ‘UN International Day of Yoga’, which was proclaimed by the United Nations on 11 December 2014 (Resolution 69/131), to be celebrated on 21 June every year. As special guest, Ms. Yogmata Keiko Aikawa, who promotes methods of meditation that develop Mindfulness and that facilitate individual awareness will also grace the event among other guests.

The aim is to raise awareness worldwide of the many benefits of yoga, an ancient physical, mental and spiritual practice that originated in the Indian sub-continent and that since December 2016 has been declared “Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” by UNESCO.

The word “yoga” derives from the Sanskrit root *yuj* and means to join or unite, symbolizing the union of body and consciousness but also the union of human beings with Mother Nature and the Universe as a whole. Today yoga is practiced in various forms around the world and continues to grow in popularity. From its beginning, yoga has promoted sustainability by helping the individual become aware of the elements of healthy living and by integrating this into a healthy Mother Earth.

The draft resolution establishing the ‘UN International Day of Yoga’ was proposed by India and cosponsored by Nepal and other 176 Member States of the UN. Introducing the concept at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations Ambassador Ashoke Mukherjee quoted Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi: “Yoga is an invaluable gift from our ancient tradition. Yoga is not just about exercise; it is a way to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and nature.”

While wholeheartedly welcoming the resolution, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations Ambassador Durga Prasad Bhattarai highlighted that the observance of the International Day of Yoga should enrich our understanding of various aspects of yoga, with a particular focus on ‘practicing’ itself. He emphasized on the application of genuine ways of yoga with minimum or no cost to the practitioner, against its commercialized versions.



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The resolution notes “the importance of individuals and populations making healthier choices and following lifestyle patterns that foster good health”—which is exactly what yoga entails for the individual, the community and the whole world. In this regard, the WHO has also urged its member states to help their citizens reduce physical inactivity, which is among the top ten leading causes of death worldwide, and a key risk factor for non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer and diabetes.

Yoga is more than a physical activity, of course, as noted by the Presidency of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly before the adoption of the resolution proclaiming the UN International Day of Yoga; “For centuries, people from all walks of life have practiced yoga, recognizing its unique embodiment of unity between mind and body. Yoga brings thought and action together in harmony.”

On the same event, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon pointed out the global benefits of Yoga. He said “Yoga is a sport that can contribute to development and peace. Yoga can even help people in emergency situations to find relief from stress. Further, yoga offers a simple, accessible and inclusive means to promote physical and spiritual health and well-being. It promotes respect for one’s fellow human beings and for the planet we share. Let us celebrate this Day — and every day — as members of one human family sharing one common, precious home.”

He also urged everyone to embrace healthier choices and lifestyles and to commit to unity with our fellow human beings, regardless of ethnicity, faith, age, gender identity or sexual orientation.

It may be noted that on the occasion of International Day of Yoga in 2016, Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Nepal Mr. K P Sharma Oli said “Yoga is an integral part of people’s daily activities for healthy body and sound thoughts”.

In the words of one of its most famous practitioners, the late B. K. S. Iyengar: “Yoga cultivates the ways of maintaining a balanced attitude in day-to-day life and endows skill in the performance of one’s actions.”

In recognition of those sentiments, and to broaden awareness of the benefits of yoga worldwide—which is what prompted the UN International Day of Yoga in the first place—*Coplanet International* is proposing a program of activities, in cooperation with the Permanent Mission of Nepal, to be held at the UN on 19 May 2017 with approximately 200-300 people in attendance.

The event will be broadcast live from the UN, on TV, radio and other mass media, including livestreaming via the Internet. We also expect wide coverage by major print media outlets, such as the New York Times, Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal, as well as specialized blogs and the UN Journal. A media blitz in newspapers and magazines, such as TIME, Newsweek and Vogue, will be supplemented by an ambitious marketing campaign that includes distribution of various promotional materials, an event-specific website and extensive use of social media.



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Please find below a tentative timeline for the event:

6:30 pm – 6:40 pm

Opening Remarks by UN Diplomat, H.E. Mr. Durga Prasad Bhattarai, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations

6:40pm – 7:00 pm

Key Note Speaker: YOGMATA KEIKO AIKAWA

7: 00 pm – 7:45 pm

Panel Discussion I: “Sustainability and Green Living through Yoga and Meditation”

Speakers: *Yogmata Keiko Aikawa*

UNEP

UN HABITAT

Q&A (Question and Answer) Session

7:45 pm – 8:45 pm

Panel Discussion II: “Yoga and Culture of Peace for Human Development”

Speakers: UNESCO/ Culture of Peace Programme

US Yoga Organization

International Yoga Organization

Q&A (Question and Answer)

8: 45 pm – 9:00 pm

Short Meditation by Yogmata Keiko Aikawa