

2 October 2014

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the International Day of Non-Violence**

**Hon Minister Sushma Swaraj,
Hon Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith,
Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am deeply honored to join you here today for this special event as we mark the International Day of Non-Violence. Today provides us a unique opportunity to reflect on the core principles of non-violence and peaceful co-existence. This event also affords us the opportunity to celebrate the birth one of the most inspirational figures in the non-violence movement, Mahatma Ghandi.

Dear Colleagues,

It is an unfortunate reality that our world is currently experiencing a profound and an appalling surge in violence. As I noted when opening the General Debate last week, in recent times, we have witnessed an increase in the number of violent conflicts around the world, while new and emerging threats posed by terrorist activities and extremism are challenging the very foundations of international peace and security. Now, more than ever, the global community must intensify its efforts toward the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

On a regular basis we are learning of new episodes of violence, seemingly from every corner of the globe. While the causes of these conflicts may vary, there is one commonality that we simply cannot ignore – namely, the devastating impact such violence has on innocent civilians. It is this stark reality that I find most troubling. While natural disasters are an unavoidable facet of human life, it is horrifying to watch the heavy toll inflicted on humanity as a result of man-made calamities.

While the picture I have painted here now may seem rather grim, I am also of the firm belief that we must not despair or accept the status quo. The current state of affairs provides every member of the global community with the distinctive opportunity to say that our world must change, and that violence is simply not the answer.

The grief and sorrow being inflicted on millions of people worldwide as a result of violent conflict must come to an end. In this context, the international community would be wise to revert to the teachings of Mahatma Ghandi, both for inspiration and guidance. Ghandi's teachings, which speak to his strong faith in the core fundamental principles of non-violence, peace and justice were derived

during a definitely different day and age. Yet, his unshakable belief that non-violence is the strongest force for change in the world remains applicable still today and should give us all hope and courage in these challenging times.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Just as the negative effects of conflict are felt at a deep personal level; the impetus for change must also emerge from the recesses of individuals' hearts and minds. Peaceful co-existence and harmony may seem like vague, notional concepts, but in a very basic sense these values speak to the willingness of human beings to resolve differences in a positive and constructive manner. The principles of non-violence are applicable in our everyday lives and on the larger global stage.

As Mahatma Ghandi wrote in 1939, "Nonviolence is a power which can be wielded equally by all – children, young men and women or grown up people – provided they have a living faith in the Gold of Love and have therefore equal love for all of mankind."

Surely this is a ringing endorsement for the belief that each and every one of us on planet Earth is empowered to help bring about a world free of violence and conflict. Every human being has an obligation to treat others with respect, compassion and love. By upholding the core values of tolerance and understanding in our everyday lives, we are undoubtedly emulating the teachings of Ghandi.

In closing I will recall another saying of Mahatma Ghandi, this one from 1931, "Nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind." This may seem like a simple sentence, but in those 10 words comes a very strong call to action. Let us as leaders heed that important message and continue to find ways to use the forces of non-violence in our everyday lives and in our collective work, for the betterment of the world and all its peoples.

I thank you for your attention.