

Panel

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Permanent Mission of India to the UN

Geneva

Human Rights Council

18th session (12 -30 September 2011)

Panel discussion to commemorate Nelson Mandela International Day

"Promotion and protection of human rights through tolerance and reconciliation"

28 September 2011

Statement by India

Madam President,

India welcomes the convening of this panel discussion on the "Promotion and protection of human rights through tolerance and reconciliation" to commemorate the Nelson Mandela International Day. It was an honour for India to co-sponsor the UN General Assembly resolution 64/13 on the commemoration of the Nelson Mandela International Day, which was endorsed by a special declaration adopted at the XV NAM Summit. We take this opportunity to pay our rich tributes to Nelson Mandela, a visionary and great leader of our times, whose life had been deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest apostle of peace and non-violence. The commemoration of the Nelson Mandela International Day is a befitting compliment to the incessant struggle of this living legend in his dedication to the service of humanity; struggle against racism and racial discrimination, and to the promotion of reconciliation, democracy and a culture of peace throughout the world.

The UN Charter states that the peoples of the United Nations are determined to practice tolerance and live together in peace. Peace and tolerance, therefore, form the core set of values that the UN has painstakingly promoted ever since its inception. These values underscore respect for diversity, solidarity, dialogue and understanding. We need to create an environment conducive for fostering dialogue among diverse cultures, in order to promote transition from force to reason; and from conflict and violence to dialogue and peace. Global efforts towards peace and reconciliation can only succeed with a collective approach that is built on trust, dialogue and

collaboration. Albert Einstein had rightly noted, "Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding."

Dialogue among different entities is also important because it is precisely in the absence of such dialogue and understanding, that intolerance, bigotry and violence flourish. This is the reason why extremist ideologies, violence and terrorism, have grown in a world in which we seem to be moving away from tolerance. Mahatma Gandhi had observed, "Intolerance is itself a form of violence and an obstacle to the growth of a true democratic spirit".

As a nation of unparalleled diversity, we in India understand the importance of building alliances among different religions, cultures and ethnic groups. India supports all efforts to build bridges of understanding between nations, peoples, religions, and cultures across the many fault-lines that exist. The world is home to such a diversity of faith and culture that proactive dialogue-based initiatives are essential to ensure better understanding between peoples. Such dialogues should expand mutual comprehension and celebrate the infinite diversity that makes up our world.

Thank you, Madam President.
