

2 October 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,  
President of the 67<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
on the International Day of Non-Violence**

External Affairs Minister Krishna,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor to join you today in celebrating the International Day of Non-Violence, which came about through the adoption of Resolution 61/271.

As I'm sure many of you know quite well, the General Assembly chose to have this coincide with the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi one of the most significant historical figures of the 20th century, and a man whose name will forever remain associated with Non-Violence.

The Mahatma's extraordinary life is incredibly difficult to emulate fully. Few have ever been able to consistently follow the standard he set.

But what is important is to keep trying to think and act like he did to strive to live up to his example and apply the philosophy of Non-Violence to the decisions we make.

Excellencies,

I strongly believe that Non-Violence is an effective instrument to advance the cause of peace and justice. In many parts of the world, it proved to be remarkably successful in the Indian Subcontinent, South Africa, here in this Hemisphere as well.

In his first speech to the General Assembly, Jawaharlal Nehru emphasized a critical component of Non-Violence. "In the long years of struggle, we were taught by our great leader never to forget not only the objectives we had, but also the methods whereby we should achieve those objectives," Nehru said. "Always he laid stress on this, that it was not good enough to have a good objective, [but] that it was equally important that the means of attaining those objectives were good. Means," he concluded, "were always as important as ends."

Non-Violence is not merely the absence of violence, just like peace is not merely the absence of war. It is the absence of hate as well the refusal to view one's opponent as a sworn enemy.

Gandhi believed that Non-Violence was the "greatest force at the disposal of mankind, [...] mightier than the mightiest weapon of mass destruction devised by the ingenuity of man."

In my view, it is also the ultimate conflict prevention resource. The sculpture outside the North Lawn Building, just a few steps from here, illustrates this well. It is a large bronze replica of a revolver, the barrel of which is tied into a knot. The gun is cocked, but the knot makes it clear that the bullet has not been fired, and that the gun will never shoot again.

For me, this sculpture, entitled “Non-Violence,” is the UN’s symbol of conflict prevention.

Excellencies,

We live in an increasingly combustible world, in which the geopolitical landscape is beset by a series of ruptures that seem to be building in intensity as they multiply and interconnect across the globe. Their effects can barely be kept in check, as everything becomes more volatile and unpredictable.

Rarely has it been more necessary for the world to draw closer together. The most significant, long-term challenges we face cannot be solved through violence sustainable development, climate change, or any other issue that globalization has brought to the surface.

This is the backdrop against which I chose the overarching theme for our work over the next twelve months, namely bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means.

I hope this will bring our attention back to the central tenet of the UN Charter: to obviate the recourse to war and provide a framework within which nations can resolve their differences harmoniously through dialogue, not discordantly through confrontation.

It was designed to create, for the first time in history, a workable international system that helps to prevent conflicts and asserts the preeminence of justice, pledging not only equal rights to all nations, but ensuring their equal dignity as well.

Regrettably, our world is still characterized by too much political confrontation, intolerance, and recurring warfare.

“I am here to sound the alarm about our direction as a human family,” said the Secretary-General at the Opening of the General Debate.

Manifestly, some of the aspirations of the UN’s founders still need to be realized.

This may seem to be a tall order it certainly won’t be easy. But in making the choice to devote the full scope of our resources to a just cause, everything becomes possible.

Gandhi’s legacy his life and his achievements reminds us what can happen when we look beyond the first obstacle on the road, and to the future with hope, confidence, and imagination.

May we draw inspiration in the difficult endeavors to come from the words of one of Gandhi's most devoted followers, Martin Luther King, Jr. A little over 45 years ago, in a speech delivered to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, he said:

I must confess, my friends, the road ahead will not always be smooth. There will be still rocky places of frustration and meandering points of bewilderment. There will be inevitable setbacks here and there. There will be those moments when the buoyancy of hope will be transformed into the fatigue of despair. [...] Difficult and painful as it is, we must walk on in the days ahead with an audacious faith in the future. [...] When our days become dreary with low-hovering clouds of despair, and when our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, let us remember that there is a creative force in this universe, [...] a power that is able to make a way out of no way and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. Let us realize the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.

Thank you for your attention.