

27 April 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Interactive Dialogue on Harmony with Nature**

**Excellencies,
Ms. Susana Malcorra, Chef de Cabinet to the UN Secretary General
Distinguished delegates and participants,**

I welcome you to the fifth Dialogue on Harmony with Nature to commemorate International Mother Earth Day.

Before we turn our attention to this important discussion, I wish to express my sincere condolences following this weekend's devastating earthquake in Nepal, which has also affected surrounding regions including, Bangladesh, India and Tibet in the People's Republic of China.

On behalf of Member States, I extend my deepest sympathies to the people and Government of Nepal, and all others affected by this disaster. I thank all those that have offered their support following this disaster and call on the international community to stand in solidarity with the Government of Nepal following this devastating earthquake.

May I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of those who lost their lives.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,**

This year's dialogue on Harmony with Nature is timely, as the formulation of an ambitious and transformative development agenda for the next fifteen years is underway.

We need to remind ourselves that the development path that we have taken over the last decades has imposed a heavy cost on our planet, leading to serious environmental degradation, among other consequences. It is now widely accepted that our way of life, especially the production and consumption patterns, is no longer sustainable.

As scientists have repeatedly warned, we are severely affecting the Earth's carrying capacity and are in danger of reaching planetary boundaries or tipping points beyond which we risk irreversible and abrupt environmental changes.

The economic, social and environmental challenges our world is facing today are inextricably linked. To address these inter-connected challenges, we have to adopt a post-2015 development agenda that is holistic in nature. The agenda should put the well-being of both humankind and our planet at the centre of our sustainable development efforts.

Beyond the post-2015 development agenda, our efforts to reach a new, universal climate change agreement this coming December in Paris will be another important step for ensuring that we have a better chance of preserving our planet for the present and future generations.

Through these efforts, we should bear in mind that profound changes in attitudes, behaviours and policies will be required to create a world in which human beings live in harmony with nature.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,**

It is heartening to see the increasing awareness and proactive stances being taken by leaders around the world to address the environmental challenges we face. Nevertheless, much more needs to be done in terms of policy making, technology development and transfer as well as education and capacity building. In this regard, it is crucial that we strengthen international cooperation and partnerships that include governments, civil society, academia, the private sector, and all relevant stakeholders.

As we prepare to adopt and move toward implementing a new development agenda, it is critical to ensure that a harmonious relationship with our planet underpins our quest to achieve sustainable development.

Today's dialogue provides a further opportunity to examine ways in which harmony with nature can contribute towards the achievement of the sustainable development goals, including combatting climate change, in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

I thank you for your attention.