

21 June 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Special Event on the International Day of Yoga**

**Your Excellency, Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs of India,
Excellencies,
Your Excellency Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Distinguished participants
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Good morning and happy Yoga Day.

It is inspiring to see such a large gathering as we commemorate this first International Day of Yoga. The diversity of participants is reflective of the widespread interest in yoga around the world; which appeals to people from all walks of life.

Today's celebration is the result of resolution 69/131, adopted by the General Assembly on 11 December, declaring the 21st of June each year as the International Day of Yoga.

The resolution was exceptional given the resounding support it received; having been unanimously adopted by consensus in just 75 days and with 177 co-sponsors, both of which were unprecedented accomplishments within the Assembly.

Excellencies,

Over the years, the international community has recognised the importance of a healthy population to socio-economic development. Increasingly, the issue of global health has taken on new meaning. We not only have to be healthy in body, but also in mind.

It is therefore befitting that today's first celebration of the International Day of Yoga is taking place in many cities around the world, including at Times Square right here in our host city, New York.

It is estimated that almost one-third of humanity will be participating celebrating this centuries-old around the world today, which is a true testament to its popularity.

For centuries, people have practiced yoga, recognizing its unique embodiment of unity between mind and body.

The benefits of practicing yoga are well-known, including stress relief, the improvement of focus and awareness as well as the promotion of overall peace of mind.

In practice, yoga also encourages selflessness, service and compassion; all of which are important values for humanity.

I thank you for the invitation to participate in this historic ceremony and your kind attention.