

**Statement by Mr. Abhishek Singh, Deputy Chief of Mission,
Embassy of India, Berlin on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti
Celebrations at Hannover**

International Day of Non-Violence

October 5, 2016

Excellencies,

Mr. Michael Hans Höntsch, MdL (Hannover Mitte), Member of Legislative Assembly, Federal State of Niedersachsen,

Mr. Stephan Handwerker, Managing Director, International School Region Hannover

Dr. Jayshankar Selvadurai, President, Indian Association Hannover

Dr. Bala Ramani, who is one of the main coordinator of today's event

My colleagues, Mr. Madan Lal Raigar, Consul General of India in Hamburg

Ms. Manjistha Mukherjee Bhatt, Director, The Tagore Centre

Ladies & Gentlemen

I am truly privileged today to be in your midst in Hannover. It is also, all the more significant that I am in the midst of students who are the torch bearers of our future. We gather today to celebrate the birth anniversary of one of the greatest human beings ever, 'Mahatma Gandhi', father of our nation. Mahatma Gandhi, who was also fondly called as Bapu, was an apostle of peace in the entire world. Rightly so, his birth anniversary on October 2 is also celebrated as a International

Day of Non-Violence. His principles and ideals are important guidance tools for all of us.

2. Today's celebration has special significance on various counts. India deposited instrument of ratification of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change on October 2 at the United Nations in New York on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The date of India depositing the instrument of ratification of the Paris Agreement was chosen to emphasize Gandhiji's legacy of environmentalism as well as the ethos of sustainability i.e. intrinsic part of his philosophy.

3. At no time has the philosophy of Gandhiji in context of non-violence, peace and tolerance, been more relevant than in today's time. We are facing across the world at an unprecedented rate, conflicts of religious and ethnic nature. The menace of terrorism has become the biggest challenge faced by the international community. It is in this background that we need to reflect on the teachings of the great Mahatma, who took on the British Empire with his philosophy of Satyagraha, Civil Disobedience and Non-Violence. Gandhiji rightly said that "an eye for an eye will make the whole world blind". We just sincerely hope that this message is understood by those who are involved in conflict which does not provide any solution to the issues that divide people and bring misery to one and all.

4. Gandhiji like all of us sitting here was born with qualities and limitations of a normal human being. It was through his experiments with

truth that he transformed into a Mahatma which means a 'great soul'. Not only that he bring freedom to our nation, he also inspired millions across the world to fight oppression and stand against the status-quo perpetuating dominance of the strong over the weak. Gandhiji always had a soft corner for the weak and downtrodden. He saw God in them. While he was guiding entire nation towards the lofty goal of independence through non-violent means, he also was the greatest influence in the social transformation of India. While he led a very simple and disciplined life, he strongly conveyed to the world that it is through simple but resolute action that we could leave the long lasting impression rather than the use of brute force.

5. Gandhiji always believed in the means and ends nexus. For him the means was as important as the ends. Today when we all are struggling with the ill effects of modernisation, Gandhiji's philosophy of giving equal importance to means and ends cannot be over emphasised. India's support for the 2030 Development Agenda is also an expression of Gandhiji's emphasis on upliftment of all. Government of India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is implementing these goals through a variety of national campaigns like "Swachh Bharat" or "Clean India", "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" which address gender discrimination to which Gandhiji was particularly sensitive. In addition, campaigns of the Government of India like "Make In India", "Skill India" and "Digital India" will not only create employment but also be providing

human dignity. These were all values which Gandhiji cherished so deeply.

6. Finally, I would like to request everyone who is present today and everyone else who believes in peace to take a moment and consider thinking about not only the present but also the future generations. Gandhiji's philosophy of non-violence and peace should be the guiding principle for all humanity. We are ourselves facing the scourge of terrorism in my part of the world. There can be no justification whatsoever for terrorism which needs to be condemned in the strongest possible terms. Gandhiji's philosophy provides a roadmap for the future of the entire human race. We must pledge today that now and for the rest of our lives, we will do whatever is possible to promote peace and harmony and fight the evil of terrorism and violence with all our might. This I think would be the greatest tribute to Gandhiji.

I would like to wish you all every success for your future endeavours and hope that all of us would also be messengers of Gandhiji's philosophy of peace and harmony which I am sure will help in making planet earth a better place for all of us to live.

I thank you all.
