

Statement by Ambassador Bhagwant S. Bishnoi, Deputy Permanent Representative of India at the  
UNGA High Level Thematic Debate on Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation: Fostering  
Peaceful, Inclusive Societies and Countering Violent Extremism on April 22, 2014

Mr. President,

I thank you for convening this debate. It is, indeed, most opportune that we discuss matters relating to fostering peaceful and inclusive societies at a time when forces of violent extremism and terrorism are threatening the very fabric of civilized society. These forces operate across borders and truly require global action to counter them. At the same time, there is merit in exchanging experiences here at the United Nations, so that we can learn from each other.

India is home to diversity – in language, religion, culture and creed. All the major religions of the world are present in India. The country is, and has been, a meeting ground of various thoughts, views and beliefs. Central to Indian thought and civilization is the principle of "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" or the world is one family. It is this fundamental proposition that has allowed the peaceful co-existence of different faiths and cultures and for diversity to flourish. Modern India has taken forward this priceless heritage focusing on the theme of "unity in diversity" as the foundation of India's developmental ethos.

Radicalization of the youth and growth of violent extremism is today a challenge in many countries. The breakdown of traditional community networks and rapid urbanization has been one of the reasons. Most important, however, is the failure of States to counter violent extremism, or to seek to do so selectively. Terrorism is evil; there can be no good terrorists and bad terrorists. In the same way, extremism and violent extremism are always evil. There should be zero tolerance.

Mr. President,

It is important, in our view, that traditional learning systems promote harmony and brotherhood of all human kind. What promotes hatred and bigotry should have no place in what is being taught. Importance needs to be given to what is contained in school and college textbooks. Tradition and culture need to be preserved in a spirit of responsibility and tolerance. In India, we seek to ensure that textbooks reflect our rich heritage of diversity.

The media, both public and private, also plays a most important role. It is the State that has to guard against incitement and the spread of hatred, based on the rule of law. States which do not take this responsibility seriously do so at their own peril. In an interconnected world, they do so at the peril of others as well.

A truly democratic, inclusive and participatory form of government goes a long way in preventing conditions that lead to violent extremism. In India, affirmative action is enshrined in our Constitution and our laws in order to redress historical injustices and to promote inclusion. It is important that no section of society feels marginalized or excluded.

Mr. President,

The gains that the world has made through economic growth over seven decades threaten to be wiped away by the forces of violent extremism unless we act collectively and credibly against this

threat. The aspirational promises of the Post 2015 Development Agenda will remain undelivered if we do not fight the cancer of fundamentalism and extremism. You have, Mr. President, done great service by highlighting the challenge through the organization of this high level thematic debate.

Thank you.