Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you all for your presence at this observance of the International day of Non-Violence, which we annually celebrate on October 2nd, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

2. This year, the occasion has a special significance as it also marks the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

3. We have annually observed the International Day of Non-Violence at the UN by focussing on non-violence as a pathway to peaceful political transitions. We have drawn on the experiences of Mahatma Gandhi as also Dr Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and many others who pursued this path which is one of the core values of the UN.
4. This year, influenced by the growing concerns for the state of our earth and the challenges posed by Climate Change, we have veered from convention to address Climate Action.

5. In keeping with our times, we have ventured to link the notion of non-violence to our approach to our environment. A non-violent approach to our natural habitat has, for long, been neglected. Yet increasingly, environment and non-violence are now seen as a good fit.

6. If we had treated the environment with non-violence, we wouldn’t have the polar ice cap melting away. We would not have had a reduction of overall biodiversity. We wouldn’t be facing pollution of our air and precious water resources or soil loss and desertification. We have treated the environment rather capriciously, if not violently.

7. It is true that Climate Change and Sustainable Development were not burning topics during Mahatma Gandhi’s lifetime, as he was born in the 19th century and succumbed to an assassin’s bullet in the first half of the 20th century. Therefore, to some, the topic Climate Action—Gandhian Ways may seem far-fetched.

8. Also, Mahatma Gandhi is known primarily for his advocacy of non-violence in the cause of political freedom. Yet, remarkably almost a century ago, in Mahatma Gandhi’s thinking, the principle of non-violence extended not just to fellow human beings, but to all beings.

9. Gandhiji’s writings were full of thoughts on living in harmony with the environment and not doing any harm to it. What we term today as “environmentalism” was intrinsic to his thought process and ethical framework.

   For example, he said,

   “We may utilize the gifts of Nature just as we choose, but in Her books, the debits are always equal to the credits.”

   Perhaps most well-known is his oft-quoted statement that “The earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s needs, but not every man’s greed.”
10. This reflects that in many ways, Mahatma Gandhi viewed primary peril stemming from within individuals than from outside, more from inside us, than from others. He introduced us to the limits of human consumption, well before we faced the spectre of acute environmental threats like global warming and its complex domino effects.

**Friends,**

11. It is entirely true that as a product of his times, Mahatma Gandhi’s efforts in the cause of greater freedom was the uniquely non-violent mass movement he led for India’s independence. However, one can also say that the challenges posed by the threat of Climate Change today call for the same kind of collective will, shared destiny, moral purpose, personal responsibility and strategic acumen as the movements that Gandhiji led.

12. Gandhiji’s ideas and thoughts, therefore, are not only entirely germane to better understand the environmental concerns that face us, but also in Climate Action efforts that need to be taken now to tackle this global crisis.

13. We do hope the keynote speakers, who address us, will shed light on some of these aspects, as a contribution to tackling what is amongst the defining issues of our times – Climate Change.

14. I welcome all of you for sparing your time to join this event to listen to the thoughtful presentations listed for today.

Thank you!