

**Remarks by
Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin
Permanent Representative of India to the UN**

**5th International Day of Yoga
Yoga with Gurus
General Assembly Hall, United Nations
20 June 2019**

Distinguished Ambassadors and colleagues from various Missions and the UN Secretariat,

Yoga Gurus, Yoga Practitioners and enthusiasts, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to this annual celebration of the International Day of Yoga at the United Nations.

The UN has a special place in the remarkable growth of Yoga in recent times. It was here, in this very General Assembly Hall, that an ancient practice of Yoga was transformed into an annual global observance.

This year marks the 5th anniversary of the International Day of Yoga.

We deeply appreciate your presence in such large numbers, braving the vagaries of the weather.

Friends,

Yoga's growing popularity and its acceptance is a testimony to the myriad benefits that the practice of Yoga brings.

Yoga has moved from being a matter of curious interest to becoming an integral part of the lives of millions across the world.

There is a growing discourse among the global community that Yoga can be one of the tools in our collective quest for promoting sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with Nature.

In keeping with this spirit, the theme for this year's Yoga Day is Yoga for Climate Action.

Climate Change is increasingly viewed as an existential crisis. States and international organisations are struggling to address this institutionally.

However, it is also important that each of us individually in our own way contributes to addressing what is amongst the most important challenges that all of us face.

As Mahatma Gandhi once said, "be the change that you want to see in the world."

The essence of yoga is balance, and that means not only balance in our bodies or our emotional lives, but also balance in our relationship with the world.

Yoga provides us a framework for managing our needs and desires. When applied to communities and societies, yoga offers a toolkit for embracing lifestyles that are sustainable.

Lifestyles that appeal to the human yearning for harmony with fellow human beings and with our larger habitat are key to our contribution as individuals to climate change.

The theory and practice of Yoga is a choice contributing towards a cleaner, greener and sustainable future. It is a natural fit to the pursuit of Climate Action at the individual level.

Individuals pursuing more sustainable lifestyles can all individually promote the broader goals that larger institutions are targeting.

The sustainable development goals adopted at the UN are underpinned by a strong moral agenda that appeals to the human yearning for harmony with fellow human beings and with nature of which we are all a part. The theory and practice of yoga, therefore, is a natural fit with this moral agenda.

I hope this indoor Yoga session, in the General Assembly Hall, the first of its kind, will reinforce the values of a cleaner, greener and more sustainable future that all you Yogis are committed to.