STATEMENT BY
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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
INTRODUCING THE DRAFT RESOLUTION
ON INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA
[A/69/L.17]
[AGENDA ITEM 124
GLOBAL HEALTH AND FOREIGN POLICY]
AT THE 69TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK DECEMBER 11, 2014
Mr. President,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

On behalf of the Indian delegation, I have the honour to introduce today draft Resolution A/69/L.17 establishing the International Day of Yoga to be commemorated at the United Nations on 21st June each year.

Mr. President,

Member states may recall that during the maiden address of the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, to the United Nations on 27th September 2014 from this very podium, he had said:

"We need to change our lifestyles. Energy not consumed is the cleanest energy. We can achieve the same level of development, prosperity and well-being without necessarily going down the path of reckless consumption. It doesn’t mean that economies will suffer; it will mean that our economies will take on a different character. For us in India, respect for nature is an integral part of spiritualism. We treat nature’s bounties as sacred. Yoga is an invaluable gift of our ancient tradition. Yoga embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfillment; harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and well-being. It is not about exercise but to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and the nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help us deal with climate change. Let us work towards adopting an International Yoga Day."

This is the vision that my delegation, along with all of you, proceeded to implement.

It is a matter of great satisfaction to all of us in this Assembly that today, less than 90 days after the proposal for an International Yoga Day was made, we have the honour to introduce before you a very forward looking, simple, yet substantive, draft Resolution calling for establishing the International Day of Yoga.

Arrived at by consensus after just two rounds of informal consultations with all member states, the text of the draft Resolution conforms to the General Assembly’s basic template for establishing International Days. The Resolution fully addresses the concern of some of our colleagues, notably from the European Union, that this proposal does not entail any additional budgetary implications for the UN system. All activities held in connection with this Day would be resourced solely through voluntary contributions.

The Draft Resolution itself is premised on six preambular and four operative paras. The preambular paragraphs draw from mostly agreed language, and recognize that Yoga provides a holistic approach to health and well-being, while acknowledging that wider dissemination of yoga’s benefits would be beneficial for the health of the world population. The main operative paragraph proclaims 21st June each year as the International Day of Yoga, while inviting all of us, member and observer states, international and regional organizations, including NGO’s, civil society and individuals to join in and raise awareness about its benefits.
Mr. President, when we started this journey, all we had was the vision articulated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, which was warmly welcomed by a small yet committed corpus of friends of this initiative. The very fact that today in the UN General Assembly, this draft resolution has garnered a record number of one hundred and seventy five co-sponsors, including the vast majority of member states of all the regional and sub-regional groups of the General Assembly, as well as all the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, is a testimony to the enthusiastic cross cultural and universal appeal that Yoga enjoys amongst members of the United Nations.

I, on behalf of my Government, would like to place on record our sincerest appreciation to each and every member state that has put its name behind this initiative of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, and assure them that we would collectively work together in making the First International Day of Yoga a grand success next year on 21st June.

I must also thank the President of the 69th General Assembly H.E. Sam Kutesa and the UN Secretary General H.E Mr. Ban ki-moon, who despite their absence, have sent special messages to members of the UN General Assembly expressing their strong support and recognition of this initiative taken by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.

Mr. President, as we are about to adopt the Resolution, it is perhaps also appropriate to recall what the late Shri B K S Iyengar, one of the most famous modern practitioners of yoga, said:

"Yoga, an ancient but perfect science, deals with the evolution of humanity. This evolution includes all aspects of one's being, from bodily health to self realization. Yoga means union - the union of body with consciousness and consciousness with the soul. Yoga cultivates the ways of maintaining a balanced attitude in day to day life and endows skill in the performance of one's actions."

When Shri Iyengar passed away on 20 August 2014 at the age of 96, the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India remarked: "Generations will remember Shri B K S Iyengar as a fine guru, scholar and a stalwart who brought yoga into the lives of many across the world".

Mr. President, in the Sanskrit language, the meaning of the word Yoga, is "to join" or "to yoke". We hope that the impact of this Resolution will yoke our efforts in the area of Global Health with our aspirations for a meaningful post-2015 Development Agenda.

I therefore recommend this draft Resolution for adoption by consensus, and thank all of you.