

Consulate General of the United States

Mumbai, India

SPEECHES AND REMARKS

Consul General Paul Folmsbee Remarks With the Maharashtra United Nations Association in honor of UN Day

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I am not going to read out VIP titles to address you today. A hallmark value of the UN is equality. Therefore, I begin my address with.....Ladies and Gentlemen.....

It is a great honor to join all of you to celebrate United Nations Day.

As many of you observed, yesterday was a historic day in the United States with the election of our first African American President-elect. In fact, it's clear that no matter which way the election might have gone - it would have been historic. If Senator McCain had won - we would have our first female Vice President. Either way, it was a triumph of the civil rights movement.

It is also true that India played an important role in what happened. The election of Barack Obama was in part due to the great success of the civil rights movement led by American hero Martin Luther King in the 1960s. Martin Luther King was very much influenced by Gandhiji here in India. It's a great day for the United States and a great day for India too.

Mr. Obama's personal background reflects America's many faces -- a basketball player, a Harvard-educated constitutional lawyer, son of a Kenyan exchange student and a Kansas-born mother who studied together in Hawaii, boyhood resident of Indonesia, Chicago community organizer, proud father of two daughters and husband of a successful lawyer, elected Illinois State Senator, and now U.S. Senator, and patriot. His impressive resume is as diverse and powerful as the United Nations itself.

What has captured the American electorate is his faith in the power of individuals to shape their destiny in a democracy. He has set a popular example with his leadership, perseverance, and optimism."

As Barack Obama likes to say: YES WE CAN!

The United Nations can boast many examples of enlightened leadership under the same principles that our country holds dear: the right of all individuals, wherever they live, to safe shelter, a livelihood, education, freedom from violence, freedom to express their views, practice their faith, and contribute to their country, whatever their ethnic background, gender, race, or beliefs.

Reaching that goal is a tall order. But it is not impossible. It just requires commitment, perseverance, and leaders who can inspire people to unite, not

divide, to reach our goal.

There is hard work ahead. President Bush noted in his message on this day:

"On United Nation's Day, we recommit ourselves to reforming the U.N., ensuring the highest standards are upheld throughout the organization, and renewing the principals of its charter for the 21st century."

Yesterday, the President-designate of the United States, Senator Barack Obama, delivered two messages as he acknowledged the work ahead.

The first message:

Leaders only succeed with dedicated support from many, many people, both those who came before and those who want change now.

His second message:

We respect our differences, because they make us stronger. We must also pursue our common interests. To move forward, we cannot divide ourselves into rich and poor, white collar and blue collar, old and young, Democrat and Republican, black and white. We are the UNITED, UNITED States of America, and united we must stand.

Likewise, the UNITED Nations needs all of us to unite, whether we live in wealthy countries or poor countries, socialist-leaning or capitalist, tropical or arctic, old or new.

Our world has become interdependent, economically, politically, and environmentally.

That gives us tremendous opportunities for cooperation.

It also raises tremendous potential for threats on a scale that wracked the 20th century.

Our success in preventing conflict, and resolving conflicts that arise, rests in part on our sense of shared destiny. It rests on the belief that a problem anywhere in the world affects all of us, as a global community.

Americans believe that human rights belong to all of mankind.

And while we recognize that no one country can enforce peace around the world, we also have hope that dialogue, negotiation, and genuine good will among nations can heal wounds and restore the health of those countries facing difficulties.

Secretary Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, voiced his commitment to a United Nations that both speaks and acts to make our community of nations a better place, saying this:

"The United Nations must deliver results for a safer, healthier, more prosperous

world. On this UN Day, I call on all partners and leaders to do their part and keep the promise."

Our world needs leaders who answer Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's call. Each of us can be a leader in the creation of lasting peace.

Whether we use our talents to design policy, explore technological solutions, build political will, educate our future leaders, inform the public, or support those whose families need health care or jobs, all of us can play a role. While we help our own countries, we help the world.

Unfortunately, some in our global community face vexing problems and lack the leadership to follow Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's vision.

While the UN applies emergency resources, conflicts continue to kill, to maim, and to dishearten our fellow global citizens.

Here among this group of leaders, I call on each of us to make the choices that will lead our own communities, and our global community, towards peace and prosperity.

India and the United States have pioneered non-violent change and democratic rule in ways that the rest of the world notices.

The diversity of our societies has helped us to learn communication, compassion, and the strength that comes from vibrant debate.

At this historic moment in our relationship, India, the United States, and our friends around the world CAN build a safe and prosperous world for the next generation.

Like the citizens responding to Senator Obama's call, friends of the United Nations can join the refrain, Yes We Can.

Thank you again for the chance to help celebrate UN Day.

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