**DRAFT Director-General’s remarks for the International Day of Yoga,**

**21 June 2015**

* **Your Excellency Ms. Margaret Kenyatta, First Lady of the Republic of Kenya,**
* **Your Excellency Mr. Yogeshwar Varma, High Commissioner of India,**
* **Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners,**
* **UN Colleagues,**
* **Ladies and gentlemen,**

**I am pleased to welcome you to the United Nations Office at Nairobi on this first-ever International Day of Yoga. It is an honour to be with you to celebrate this Day.**

**-2-**

**I would like to especially thank the First Lady for gracing us with her presence today. The First Lady’s participation and the [PLEASE SELECT APPROPRIATE WORD DEPENDING ON NUMBER OF PEOPLE ATTENDING: large/good/impressive/sizable] turn-out for this event are proof that Yoga is a very relevant practice in the lives of so many people, in Kenya and around the world.**

**-3-**

**When the United Nations General Assembly last year adopted the resolution proclaiming 21 June as the International Day of Yoga, it stressed the importance of individuals and populations making healthier choices and following lifestyle patterns that are devoid of excesses of all kinds.**

**The General Assembly also emphasized the need to exchange best practices from around the world to promote global health. This celebration today is very**

**-4-**

**much in line with the spirit of the General Assembly resolution.**

**The presentations we will hear this morning from**

**learned practitioners and instructors will help us to better appreciate the benefits of Yoga. The celebration will also raise awareness of how this ancient tradition can contribute to global health as a long-term development objective of the United Nations.**

**-5-**

**All of us can contribute to building a healthier world, through our individual lifestyle choices and our daily actions – at home, in our schools, our workplaces, and, yes, on our Yoga mats.**

**I wish to thank the High Commission of India for organizing this celebration, in collaboration with our UN Information Center, and for choosing UNON as the venue for this inaugural commemoration.**

**-6-**

**Today’s celebration reminds us that this beautiful compound is not just for UN staff members. This campus belongs to all of us, all of you, as members of the United Nations family and as global citizens. I am very happy whenever the compound is used for such worthwhile events.**

**Thank you again for coming today.**

**I now have the distinct honour of delivering the message of the Secretary-General on the occasion of**

**-7-**

**the first International Day of Yoga, which reads of follows:**

**“During a visit to India this year, I had the opportunity to practice yoga with one of my senior advisors. Although he happened to be a son of the country, I might equally have done the same with many other colleagues from different parts of the world. Yoga is an ancient discipline from a traditional setting that has grown in popularity to be enjoyed by**

**-8-**

**practitioners in every region. By proclaiming 21 June as the International Day of Yoga, the General Assembly has recognized the holistic benefits of this timeless practice and its inherent compatibility with the principles and values of the United Nations.**

**Yoga offers a simple, accessible and inclusive means to promote physical and spiritual health and well-being. It promotes respect for one’s fellow human beings and for the planet we share. And yoga does not discriminate; to varying degrees, all people can**

**-9-**

**practice, regardless of their relative strength, age or ability.**

**I discovered this for myself on trying to do my first asana, a tree pose suited to beginners. It took a moment for me to gain my balance but once I did, I appreciated the simple sense of satisfaction that yoga can bring.**

**-10-**

**On this first-ever International Day of Yoga, let us see the benefits of this practice in terms of individual well-being as well as our collective efforts to improve public health, promote peaceful relations and usher in a life of dignity for all.”**

**End of quote.**

**Thank you for your kind attention.**

**-11-**