

UNIC Director says

'The Future We Want' was the theme of the UN Goodwill Ambassadors Dinner which had in attendance Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi, cricketer Sachin Tendulkar, veteran actor Sharmila Tagore, actor-activist Nandita Das and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. All the speakers focussed on the theme of children and youth, aligning with the celebrations of 70 years of the UN in India.

The evening commenced with the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addressing the ambassadors and the distinguished guests that included a delegation from Indian Federation of United Nations Associations (IFUNA) and the Executive Board of the National Progressive Schools' Conference (NPSC).

The Secretary-General told the audience, which included a number of students, how much he appreciated the efforts of the Goodwill Ambassadors present in their respective fields. He officially launched the UN@70 campaign to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. He took that opportunity to thank all the UN staff in India for their hard work and dedication. He spoke about the yoUNg@70 initiative that is especially valuable in a country like India, which has more young people than anywhere else in the world. The Secretary-General underscored the strong partnership between India and the United Nations in the fight for equality of all individuals, giving priority to children and women welfare.

The Secretary-General also told the audience that while we may all differ from one another, we all have the same human rights.

"I am proud to stand for the equality of all people – including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender," Ban said.

Following this Mr. Kailash Satyarthi addressed the gathering and talked about how important it is for children to be free to dream, drawing from his personal fight against child slavery and labour. He said, "Whenever I liberate a child, I liberate myself. Freedom is my strife, my inspiration and my power". He spoke of the need to end child labour, after having earlier submitted a petition to Ban Ki-moon with over 550,000 signatures to include abolishing child labour in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador for Hygiene and Sanitation, Sachin Tendulkar shared an anecdote about his dream of being a cricketer as a child and having the freedom and support of his family to reach his goal. Having worked with child rights issues, he asserted, "Children are the future of our planet." On the fight to end exploitation of children, he found that the staggering numbers were not a record to be proud of.

Veteran actor Sharmila Tagore rallied in support of improving maternal health, with a special focus on the non-urban areas. She shared her personal experiences about working with women and her learnings on how easily avoidable maternal deaths are. "We need to value our daughters as much as our sons", she said. She stressed on the vulnerability of excluded groups that includes persons with HIV and members of the LGBTQ community.

Actor Nandita Das pressed on the idea of how it is as important to understand the need for men to get sensitized as it is for women to practice freedom. She mentioned how she envisions the "same future for every child" as she does for her own, and how we must all understand and implement that idea.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon spontaneously pinned UN Women's "HeForShe" campaign badges on Kailash Satyarthi and Sachin Tendulkar.

The evening, moderated by UNIC National Information Officer Rajiv Chandran, ended on a note of optimism that we will together be able to create, build and achieve 'The Future We Want.'



UNSG thanks Sachin Tendulkar for batting for UN Women's "HeForShe" campaign

First: Investing in women and children is the most powerful way to attain global progress.

Second: We have to fight for the equality of all members of our human family regardless of any difference, including sexual orientation.

Third: When we strengthen the UN-India partnership, this country and our world will advance.

Make sure you leave some autographs before you leave!

I thank you all for your strong commitment, leadership and vision. I know how busy you are – you are wanted here and there – still you are lending your time and vision for global peace and harmony.

Tonight is all about discussing and committing ourselves to make a better world and to discuss about the future we want; what kind of a future do you really want to inherit to your children and great grandchildren? This is our moral and political responsibility today.

We are coming together to launch the UN@70. You know that UN is celebrating its 70th anniversary. It was founded in 1945; now this is 2015.

I thank all of my UN colleagues in India led by Ms. Grande, our Resident Coordinator. In fact, she is leaving to take another very important job responsibility in Iraq. Lets give a big encouragement.

Now all these supporters, they came up with a wonderful slogan: this is, "yoUNg@70".

It is a clever play on words. If you want to write y-o-u-n-g, you cannot write "young" without UN. So that is very clever wordplay but it is also a brilliant initiative to involve young people. The timing is perfect – today is National

Youth Day in India. Congratulations for your commitment and wisdom.

India has more young people than any other country in the world. The number of young people under 25 – you are the biggest country in that regard.

I am delighted that the National Progressive Schools Conference will be involved in helping to explain the United Nations to young audiences – and to raise a new generation of global citizens. I also welcome the members of Model UN conferences, members of UN Associations in India for their strong support.

I applaud my UN family in India for basing the commemorations on partnerships – and for using the incredible amplifying power of social media to spread the word.

I have today three messages that I hope you will push out today on your own networks.

Now I am going to speak in sentences that will fit in tweets. I hope some of you will be tweeting.

I hope you are tweeting!

I give so much priority to women's and children's welfare because I have seen its value for all people.

We have major UN initiatives to drive progress: I have launched Every Woman Every Child, Global Education First, UNiTE to End Violence against Women and our daily work around the world.

We are striving to provide women and girls with proper health services, including for sexual and reproductive health. We are pushing for equality in education. We are advocating for the human rights of women and girls. Our goal is to empower them to contribute to our common future.

India has made great progress – but it still has the highest number of deaths of children under the age of five, and about a quarter of all mothers who die in childbirth are laid to rest in India.





Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Mrs. Ban with principals and student leaders from the National Progressive Schools' Conference

I commend the Government's efforts to address these issues. I applaud Prime Minister Modi for committing to expanding vaccine coverage. I also welcome his initiative to put a toilet in every household and school by 2019. This is a matter of health and safety – especially for women and girls.

We are all different from one another, but we all have the same human rights.

I am proud to stand for the equality of all people – including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

I staunchly oppose the criminalization of homosexuality.

I speak out because laws criminalizing consensual, adult same-sex relationships violate basic rights to privacy and to freedom from discrimination. Even if they are not enforced, these laws breed intolerance.

As you may know recently, I have made UN regulations change to allow the same entitlement to those staff who have different sexual orientations.

I am very grateful to the Bollywood celebrities who have joined the United Nations Free & Equal campaign, especially Celina Jaitly and Imran Khan. They have reached millions of people with a message of equality.

I have had a deep connection with India since I came here for my first diplomatic posting. My son was born in India during that time. Maybe since we have such a strong family feeling about India it was only natural that my daughter found an Indian man as her

husband. Today, this afternoon, as soon as I arrived in Delhi, I met my in-laws.

I even enrolled in Max Mueller Bhavan – maybe some of you know Max Mueller Bhavan where they taught languages – to study some Hindi. That was so long ago, 42 or 43 years ago, I would sound old-fashioned if I try to speak it! But I used to say *Main Hindi thoda thoda bolta hun.* [“I speak a little bit of Hindi.”]

But let me try anyway.

Mera iss desh ke saath ek gehra bandhan hai. Main Bharat vaapas aake bohot khush hua. [“I have a deep connection with this country. I am very happy to be back in India.”]

I admit I have great personal affection for India. But I am speaking objectively – objectively – when I say that India is an important country for me but much more important for the United Nations. It is one of our big contributors to peacekeeping, Democracy Fund and many other initiatives.

I came here to strengthen our

partnership because India's collaboration with the United Nations is good for this country and for our world.

You are all showing a great sense of global citizenship. I thank you for your engagement. I am confident that we can use the UN@70 commemorations to strengthen the valuable UN-India bond.

Yesterday, I visited the Sabarmati Gandhi Ashram in Gujarat. I reflected on the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi.

From the very birth of the idea of the United Nations, he supported it. Gandhi once said, “India would be morally bound to help the United Nations.”

Let us take up this call so that India and the United Nations, helping each other, can help our world together.

The Future We Want must be built by our hands. I have been saying that the future is in our hands so we need to have all of our hands together.

To mark the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, I declare what people across the planet already know: that a strong United Nations means a better world, a more harmonious peaceful world.

Sashakt Sanyukt Rashtra, Shresht Vishva. [“Strong UN, Better World.”]

Hamesha young rahe! [“Always stay young!”]



Secretary-General with the Indian Federation of United Nations Associations (IFUNA) delegation

Photo: UNIC/ K. Manoharan