

NURTURE DIVERSITY BY CONDEMNING HATE SPEECH UNEQUIVOCALLY: UN CHIEF

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: UNO and its various Agencies

Speaking up: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres addressing gathering at the IIT-Bombay in Mumbai on Wednesday. AFP-

Making a strong pitch for the protection of human rights and pluralism in India, UN Secretary-General António Guterres on Wednesday urged Indians to condemn hate speech. Addressing a gathering at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Bombay, Mr. Guterres said India's global role will benefit if "concrete actions" are taken in support of the "rights and freedoms of journalists, human rights activists, students and academics".

"Diversity is a richness that makes your country stronger. That understanding...must be nurtured, strengthened and renewed every day by practising the values of Gandhi; by securing and upholding the rights and dignity of all people, especially the most vulnerable; by taking concrete action for inclusion, recognising the enormous value and contributions of multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic societies; by condemning hate speech unequivocally," Mr. Guterres said.

India was re-elected on October 13 to the UN Human Rights Council but India's recent human rights record has received criticism from a number of UN experts who have called upon New Delhi to ensure the safety of human rights activists, journalists and student leaders like Teesta Setalvad, Rana Ayyub, Siddique Kappan and Umar Khalid, who have been in the focus of government agencies.

"I urge Indians to be vigilant and to increase your investments in an inclusive, pluralistic, diverse community and society," Mr. Guterres said.

"As an elected member of the Human Rights Council, India has a responsibility to shape global human rights, and to protect and promote the rights of all individuals," he added.

Mr. Guterres referred to the impact of the Ukraine crisis that has engulfed the commodities market across the world and said, "I urge India to continue speaking up for peace; to expand its global leadership; to align its development and its foreign policy with the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) and the Paris Agreement; to find innovative solutions to today's global crises."

Mr. Guterres praised India's non-violent struggle for Independence from colonial rule. He said the upcoming Presidency of India at the G-20 will provide an opportunity for highlighting the "values and vision of the developing world".

Earlier in the morning, Mr. Guterres visited the memorial for the victims of the 26/11 terror attack in Mumbai and spoke against violent extremism, saying, "Fighting terrorism must be a global priority for every country on earth."

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