

UN urges building more just, equal societies to increase happiness and well-being worldwide

20 March 2017 – Speaking at an event today marking the International Day of Happiness, the deputy United Nations chief called for more inclusive, equitable and balanced approaches to development that promote sustainability, poverty eradication, happiness and well-being of all peoples.

“Many countries have undertaken efforts to develop broader measures of progress, often through public consultations, parliamentary commissions, and efforts to develop new indicators and understanding of well-being,” said Amina Mohammed, the UN Deputy Secretary-General.

Cautioning that pursuing only economic growth and disregarding social and environmental dimensions can have negative impact on human well-being and can result in growing inequalities and environmental degradation, she underlined that development should not take place “at all costs.”

“Not at the cost of environment or the marginalization of the poor and other vulnerable groups,” she added.

In her remarks, Ms. Mohammed noted that well-being did not depend solely on income but also included other factors such as personal and job security, fundamental freedoms, a clean environment, as well as having strong family and social relations.

VIDEO: Global Happiness Council launched at the United Nations

“These human needs can be fulfilled in societies where people are empowered to pursue their own goals that ensure their personal well-being in societies that are inclusive and egalitarian, and where human rights are cherished and respected,” she said.

The deputy UN chief recalled that the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have provided a blue print to collectively building such societies and their recognition that ending poverty needs to go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and addresses a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

Highlighting the organization’s work to promote and secure the well-being and happiness of all peoples she urged everyone to renew the commitment to continue building more just and equal societies to increase people’s happiness and well-being worldwide.

Bicycling for love

Also today, commemorating the International Day, the UN Bookshop in New York hosted the launch of *The Amazing Story of the Man Who Cycled from India to Europe for Love* that recounted the story of artist Pradyumna Kumar, or PK.

Born in a poor family belonging to the so called 'untouchable' caste in India, PK undertook a bicycle journey through Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Bulgaria, (former) Yugoslavia, Germany, Austria and Denmark to be reunited with the love of his life, Charlotte, in Sweden, whose portrait he had drawn a few months earlier, in India.

They have been happily married for more than 40 years now.