Draft\_rev5, **Sri Chinmoy Heart-Garden Two-Mile Race and Observance**

**Tuesday, Oct 10th, 2017, 10am**

H.E. Ambassador Davidson Hepburn

President of the 35th General Conference of UNESCO

Founding Executive Director, Government Public Policy Institute

University of the Bahamas, Nassau

Distinguished Guests and Dear Friends,

I am extremely happy and honoured to be here with you today at this auspicious ceremony at the **Sri Chinmoy Heart-Garden**.

This **wonderful garden**, plus the **Sri Chinmoy Street**, where today’s race was held, were **dedicated**

* **on October 11, 2006, by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation**,
* in **celebration of Sri Chinmoy’s life and his love of running**, exactly **one year before his passing.**

It has been eleven years now, and I am delighted to be here to pay tribute to my dear friend Sri Chinmoy

* who dedicated his life for the **noble goals of world-peace and oneness.**

For me, Sri Chinmoy was **more than a friend; he was a lover of peace** and a servant of God. He always had a **glow of peace and love from deep within**.

I first met Sri Chinmoy in **1978 while serving as Ambassador of the Bahamas** to the United Nations.

Sri Chinmoy went to the UN twice a week starting **in 1970 when Secretary-General U Thant requested** him to offer silent **peace prayers and meditations** for **delegates and staff of all faiths**.

The Peace Meditation at the United Nations, which Sri Chinmoy continued until his passing in 2007, **gave me and many other ambassadors and UN leaders much inner peace and strength.**

Sri Chinmoy was an **innovator for peace**—all that he created was done with the goal of **encouraging peace to grow within the hearts and lives of individuals,** thereby fostering world-peace.

I have been indeed **privileged to take part** many times in the Sri Chinmoy **Oneness-Home World Harmony and Peace Runs** which he **began in 1987**.

I have **seen hundreds of children** in my own home country of the Bahamas, in **Kazakhstan** and elsewhere, run with **boundless joy and enthusiasm** – certain that they can make a difference for peace.

Each and **every child** who holds the flaming peace torch **will remember that moment** his entire life.

As **President of the 35th General Conference of UNESCO**, one of my main goals was to **foster a culture of peace**.

I found **natural partners** amongst the many people working with **Sri Chinmoy’s international peace initiatives**.

They **bring millions of world citizens into active service** for the peace of our common planet.

As we think of the United Nations proclaimed Sustainable Development Goals (**SDGs) – these 17 Global Goals** - we know the “**oneness-world” vision** that Sri Chinmoy encouraged **adds energy and enthusiasm** to practical steps required.

**Few** may serve directly at **UN Organizations**,

* but **all can share the willingness** to work towards the implementation of these 17 special goals
* based upon an **understanding of our interdependence** and common home. *For example*,
* *Goal* ***3****:* ***Good health and well-being* which this park so beautifully supports**;
* *Goal* ***10****:* ***Reduce inequalities among countries*** *(we must have at* ***least 20 countries represented*** *here today);*
* *Goal* ***16: Peace, Justice*** *(so many of us* ***cherish*** *these…*

Soon **after Sri Chinmoy’s passing** in 2007, people from different countries had the inspiration to **create peace monuments** in the form of a statue of Sri Chinmoy as a **vibrant reminder to continue** his grassroots efforts for world peace.

Indeed, we have **so few role models** for young people **yet Sri Chinmoy was an excellent example** of what one **individual can do for peace**.

The first **statue** of Sri Chinmoy was placed in **Oslo in 2008** with many other statues coming later.

These monuments can be **seen throughout the year, inspiring his message and spirit of peace**

**– silently inviting all** to offer their good will and a personal prayer for peace.

Many of the **outdoor spaces like this one,**

* **are in beautiful, peaceful locations** that **inspire people**
* to meditate and **to bring to the fore their own deepest aspirations.**

I pray that we **each become messengers** for peace,

- runners within and without, to make this **world of ours a oneness-home**.

May I close with the words from

*Sri Chinmoy’s* ***Heart Garden****: A Book of Aphorisms for* ***Joy and Inspiration***:

“**The language of the heart**

**Is the only language**

**That everybody can understand**.”

~ Sri Chinmoy