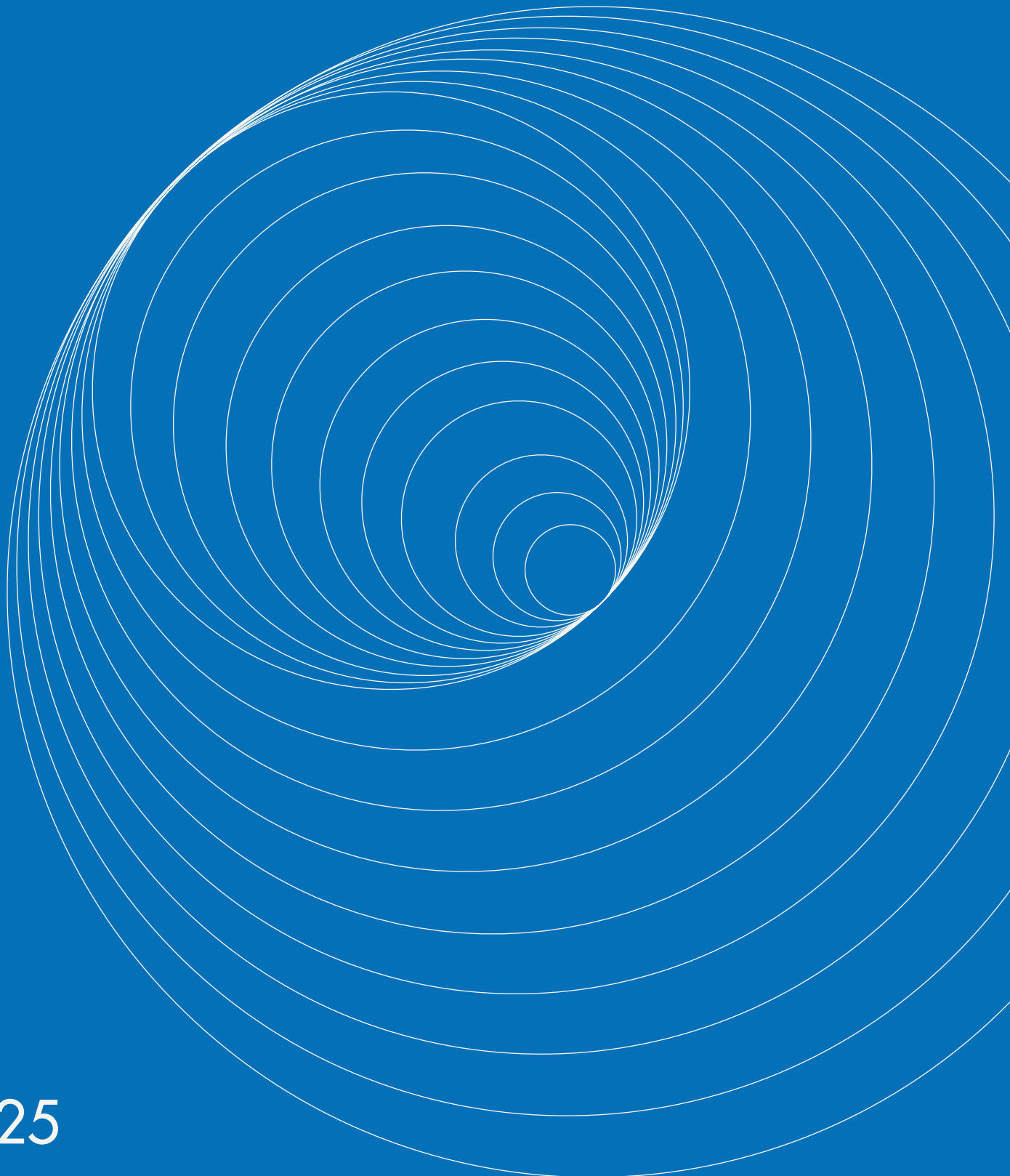


The Universality of Meditation



2025

A report prepared under the United & Present Initiative
led by the United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR)

Design and layout by the
Center for Health & Well-being at IE University

Foreword

United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR)

The work of the United Nations is carried out by people who often operate in environments marked by complexity, urgency, and sustained exposure to human suffering. Supporting the mental health and well-being of United Nations personnel and fostering conditions for collective well-being is therefore fundamental to the effective, ethical, and sustainable delivery of mandates, including the promotion and protection of human rights. Strengthening well-being is not only about supporting those who work within the Organization, but also about advancing the mission of the United Nations for the peoples, communities, and individuals it continues to serve.

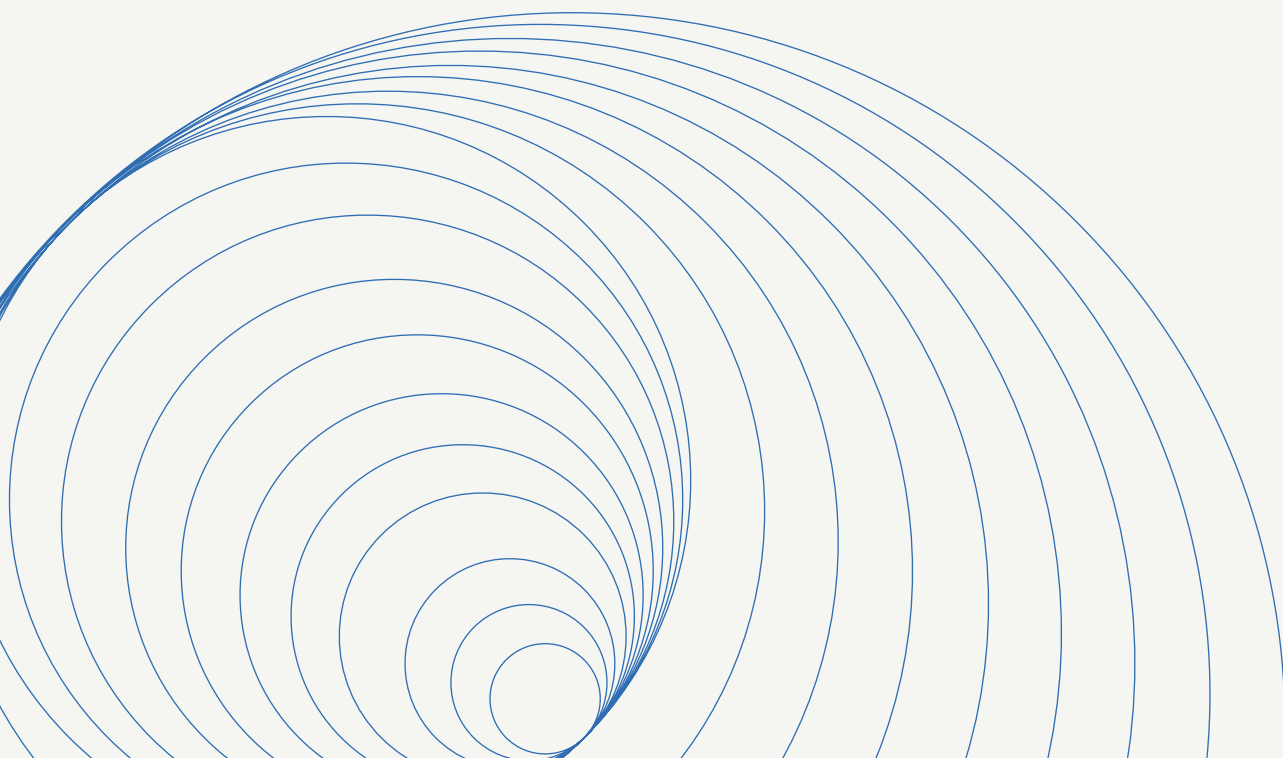
Within this context, the United Nations has long recognized the value of silence, reflection, and inner resources. From the minute of silence for prayer or meditation observed in the General Assembly since its early years, to the creation of dedicated spaces for contemplation, and more recently through evidence-based well-being initiatives, meditative and contemplative practices have formed part of the institutional landscape of the Organization. The proclamation of World Meditation Day by the General Assembly in 2024 further affirms the relevance of these practices within contemporary multilateral engagement.

This report, developed in the context of the United & Present Initiative of the United Nations Human Rights Office and prepared under the coordination of its Well-Being Unit, is designed as a first, illustrative contribution to documenting how meditative and contemplative practices are reflected across the United Nations system and in public life worldwide. It brings together historical references, institutional developments, and illustrative examples across sectors and regions. While it does not seek to be exhaustive, nor to prescribe particular approaches, this report is a contribution to support learning, dialogue, and reflection over time.

Approaches grounded in awareness, presence, and compassion can support individuals and teams navigating demanding professional contexts. When embedded thoughtfully and inclusively, such practices may contribute to individual resilience, collective well-being, and healthier organizational cultures, enabling the United Nations to carry out its work with clarity, integrity, and humanity.

This report was made possible through the support and engagement of many individuals and institutions. We recognize, in particular, the Centre for Health & Well-being at IE University for its contribution to the conceptual design and visual presentation of the report. We are grateful to the many partners with whom we collaborate under the broader United & Present initiative, including through the conference United & Present: Global Solutions from Within, held at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 9 to 11 December 2025. These collaborations include, on a non-exhaustive basis, the Dharma Alliance, the Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies, the Oxford Mindfulness Foundation, the Mindfulness Initiative, and the Geneva University Hospitals and the University of Geneva. We acknowledge with appreciation the financial support of partners, including the Nouveau Monde Foundation and the Trust for Meditation, as well as the contribution of Liechtenstein to the Well-being Unit for its activities, including on mindfulness and mental health.

At a time of profound global challenges, fostering conditions that support mental health, well-being, and inner stability is a shared responsibility across the United Nations system. It is our hope that this report can serve as a modest resource in that collective effort—in support of both those who work within the United Nations and the people and communities the Organization exists to serve—while honouring the diversity of cultural, spiritual, secular, and scientific traditions through which meditation is understood and practiced around the world.



Introduction: The Universality of Meditation



All figures without captions are license-free images for illustrative purposes.

Meditation has been present across cultures, regions, and historical periods in diverse forms and traditions. This universality has enabled meditation to remain relevant across contexts, from ancient traditions to contemporary public life, including within multilateral and institutional settings.

Archaeological and historical scholarship suggests that meditative practices date back several millennia. Their roots range from religious to yogic to secular traditions across cultures. Meditative practices

bear historical ties, inter alia, to South Asian, East Asian, Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, and African contexts, including traditions associated with ancient India, the Himalayan region, Persia, Egypt, and China, as well as to Judaism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism, the Yungdrung Bon tradition, Christianity, and Islam¹.

1. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/meditation-day> (last visited December 15, 2025)

Meditation is commonly understood as a set of practices that cultivate focused attention, awareness, or contemplative presence, and is associated with outcomes such as mental clarity, emotional balance, and physical relaxation. Such practices may include, inter alia, mindfulness-based approaches, Vipassana, Zazen, Transcendental Meditation, Dzogchen, Sufi contemplative practices, meditation approaches in Indian Vedic traditions, and movement-based contemplative practices.



Meditation has not only been described as a set of practices, but also as a particular state of the mind, characterized by awareness, presence, and inner stillness. This understanding was echoed during the United Nations' conference *United and Present – Global Solutions from Within*³, where speakers emphasized that meditation may be understood both as a structured practice and as a cultivated state of awareness that can inform individual conduct and collective engagement. Meditation is also increasingly recognized for its contributions to well-being and mental health, supporting the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, which is a human right. Over recent decades, secular forms of meditation, including mindfulness-based interventions, have been acknowledged as effective approaches for stress management and emotional regulation. The World Health Organization (WHO) has highlighted their potential benefits in addressing anxiety and promoting psychological well-being. Research has indicated that meditation may contribute to reducing stress, blood pressure, and anxiety, promote emotional health, enhance self-awareness, and improve sleep.



Beyond individual benefits, meditation can also support collective well-being by fostering empathy,

social cohesion, and a shared sense of purpose. In this regard, meditation may contribute to the objectives reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals, as resilience and awareness can contribute to more peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable societies.⁶ This perspective also shapes emerging initiatives within the UN system, such as the Conscious Food Systems Alliance (CoFSA), launched in 2022 and hosted by UNDP, which brings together development practitioners across sectors to integrate mindfulness, presence, and compassion as core capacities for advancing resilient, equitable, and regenerative food systems, drawing on Indigenous and local knowledge.⁷



Logo of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

2. [World Meditation Day | United Nations](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)
3. [1st Meeting, United and Present - Global Solutions from Within | UN Web TV](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)
4. [Anxiety disorders](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)
5. [World Meditation Day | United Nations](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)
6. [World Meditation Day | United Nations](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)
7. <https://consciousfoodsystems.org/> (last visited January 22, 2026)

Meditation is more than just a personal practice. It is a universal and time-honored approach to fostering resilience and promoting well-being.⁸

Volker Türk, 8th United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Meditation transcends borders, faiths, traditions, and time [...] In its silence, meditation speaks a universal truth that we are all human, all seeking balance, and all striving for a better understanding of our inner self and world in which we live.⁹

Philemon Yang, 79th President of the United Nations General Assembly

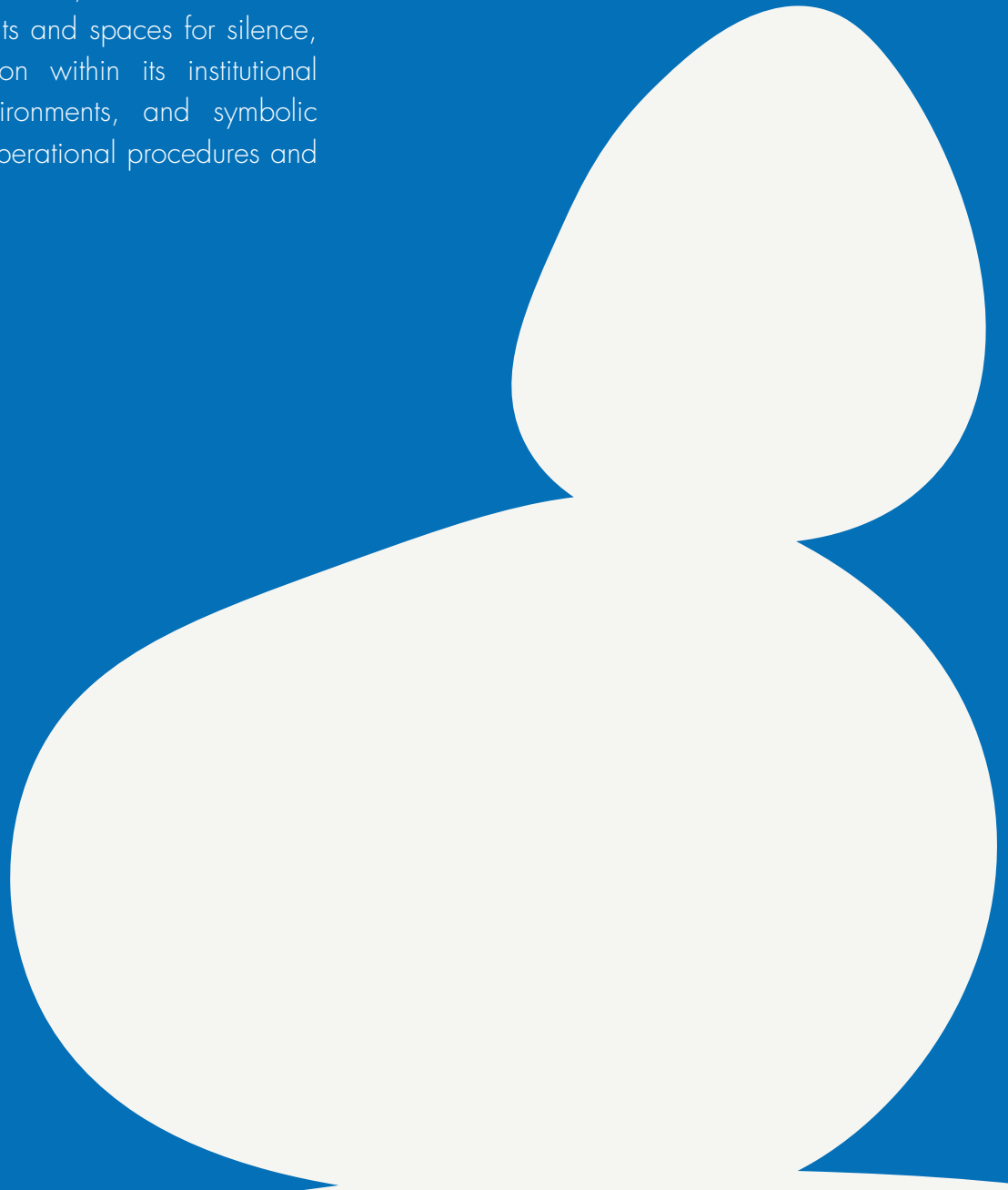


8. https://x.com/volker_turk/status/1870363607797522479?lang=en (last visited December 15, 2025)

9. [Meditation for World Peace and Harmony | UN Web TV \(08:31 - 09:09\)](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)

Meditation across the United Nations System

Since its establishment in 1945, the United Nations has incorporated moments and spaces for silence, reflection, and meditation within its institutional practices, physical environments, and symbolic traditions as part of its operational procedures and global outreach efforts.



Minute of Silence for Prayer or Meditation

Meditation is mentioned in the early years of the United Nations. The General Assembly Resolution A/RES/362 (IV), Methods and Procedures of the General Assembly, introduces it in Annex I New Rule 56 (a) as follows:

“Immediately after the opening of the first plenary meeting and immediately preceding the closing of the final plenary meeting of each session of the General Assembly, the President shall invite the representatives to observe one minute of silence dedicated to prayer or meditation.”

Adopted in 1949 by the original 51 Member States of the United Nations, this provision remains in force today. The current Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly retain the original language in Rule 62.¹⁰

RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

*(embodying amendments and additions
adopted by the General Assembly
up to and including its seventy-fifth session)*



Resolutions

Rule 59

Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly shall be communicated by the Secretary-General to the Members of the United Nations within fifteen days after the close of the session.

X. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE MEETINGS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ITS COMMITTEES AND ITS SUBCOMMITTEES

General principles

Rule 60

The meetings of the General Assembly and its Main Committees shall be held in public unless the organ concerned decides that exceptional circumstances require that the meeting be held in private. Meetings of other committees and subcommittees shall also be held in public unless the organ concerned decides otherwise.

Private meetings

Rule 61

All decisions of the General Assembly taken at a private meeting shall be announced at an early public meeting of the Assembly. At the close of each private meeting of the Main Committees, other committees and subcommittees, the Chairman may issue a communiqué through the Secretary-General.

XI. MINUTE OF SILENT PRAYER OR MEDITATION

Invitation to silent prayer or meditation

Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly

10: https://www.un.org/en/ga/about/ropga/pdf/A_520_Rev.20.pdf (last visited December 15, 2025)

Since 1949, General Assembly sessions have opened and closed with a minute of silence for prayer or meditation. The President of the Assembly traditionally invites delegations to rise in observance of said minute.

1955



The 10th Session of the General Assembly Opens (1955)

2011



General Assembly Opens Sixty-Sixth Session (2011)

1971



General Assembly Opens Its Twenty-Sixth Regular Session (1971)

Minute of silence during the opening of the General Assembly sixty-sixth session. From left to right: Secretary-General Bank Ki-moon; Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly; and Muhammad Shaaban, Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management.

2025



A wide view of the General Assembly Hall as a moment of silence is held during the last plenary meeting of the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly.

General Assembly Closes 79th Session
(2025)

The minute of silence dedicated to prayer or meditation has been expanded to other General Assembly meetings, such as the Special Session on Raw Material and Development.¹¹

1974



Delegates observe a minute of silence dedicated to prayer or meditation.

General Assembly begins the Special Session of Raw Materials
and Development (1974)

11. <https://dam.media.un.org/assetmanagement/2AM9LOO85DK5?&WS=SearchResults&Flat=EP> (last visited December 15, 2025)

Meditation Room

1952

Construction of the United Nations Headquarters in New York began in 1949¹², with plans including a space for silent reflection open to all - regardless of faith, creed, or religion.¹³ The Meditation Room, located on the northwestern end of the entrance level of the General Assembly Building, opened in 1952.¹⁴



The Meditation Room at the United Headquarters
(1952)

1953



United Nations Meditation Room
(1953)

1955



Meditation Room at the U.N. Headquarters
(1955)

12. [Construction of UN Headquarters | UN Photo](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)

13. [Room for meditation at the United Nations](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)

14. <https://www.un.org/ungifts/meditation-room> (last visited December 15, 2025)

The second United Nations Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, ordered a renovation of the room and championed much of the new design. Instead of chairs, the new room featured benches designed by Swedish furniture designer Carl Malmsten. To signify a mark of permanence in a constantly changing world, Sweden donated a 6-ton iron ore stone altar that was placed in the centre of the room.¹⁵

In line with the collective dimension of calm and meditation, a group of organizations and individuals came together as the "Friends of the UN Meditation Room," contributing to its renovation and ongoing maintenance.¹⁶

After the completion of the renovation, the room was reopened in 1957. At the opening ceremony, United Nations Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, shared:

*"We have within us a centre of stillness surrounded by silence. This house, dedicated to work and debate in the service of peace should have one room dedicated to silence in the outward sense and stillness in the inner sense [...] There is an ancient saying that the sense of a vessel is not in its shell but in the void. So it is with this room. It is for those who come here to fill the void with what they find in their centre of stillness"*¹⁷



Meditation Room at the United Nations Headquarters
(1957)

A view of the recently enlarged and remodelled Meditation Room at United Nations Headquarters. The fresco in the background, created by Swedish artist Bo Beskow, measures 9 feet high and 6.5 feet wide and intends to guide the gazes of visitors to a point of rest.

15. [Meditation Room | United Nations Gifts](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)

16. [Meditation Room | United Nations Gifts](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)

17. [smallfolder-beskowweb.pdf](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)

In October 2021, the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations donated 12 new benches, identical to the original Carl Malmsten benches.¹⁸

As a complement to the Meditation Room at United Nations Headquarters in New York, the United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR) has facilitated the establishment of a meditation room at the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva, which will be open to all. On 10 December 2025, which also marked Human Rights Day, OHCHR held a symbolic inauguration of the new meditation room. Attended by representatives from Member States, the United Nations, as well as religious traditions, the soft opening highlighted the role of physical spaces dedicated to silence and contemplation.

On this occasion, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, emphasized the importance of compassion and awareness as essential foundations for human rights, diplomacy, and global cooperation.¹⁹

A formal inauguration is planned for 2026, following completion of renovation works.

The creation of physical spaces dedicated to meditation within the United Nations system extends to its specialized agencies. The Garden of Peace at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, designed by Japanese American artist Isamu Noguchi in 1957 and restored in 2024, provides a space for meditation for employees and visitors. The garden spans 1'700 m² and invites contemplation through intentional relationships between natural elements and art objects.²⁰



Render of the meditation room at Palais des Nations, United Nations Office at Geneva



UNESCO Headquarters in Paris

18. [After 60 years of meditation - Hammarskjöld's benches show their age - United Nations Western Europe](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)

19. [RoS Soft Inauguration Meditation Room](#)

20. [Revisiting the Garden of Peace at UNESCO – A Living Legacy of Isamu](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)

World Meditation Day

The General Assembly draft resolution to proclaim 21 December World Meditation Day was initiated by a core group of Member States, consisting of Andorra, India, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. It was presented informally to the United Nations Membership in November 2024. Based on suggestions by Member States, a revised version was created and formally introduced to the General Assembly on 6 December:



General Assembly Holds 48th Plenary Meeting (2024)

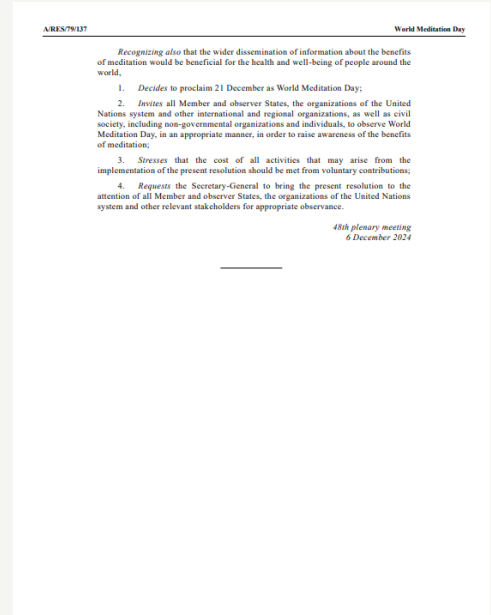
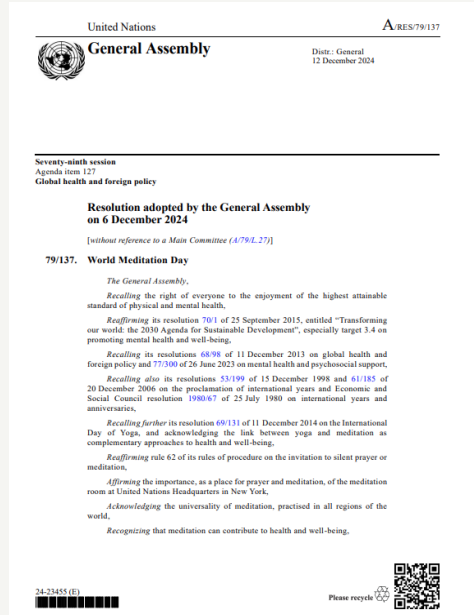
Myriam Oehri, Deputy Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the UN, introduces a draft resolution during the 48th plenary meeting of the General Assembly.

“By adopting this resolution and creating World Meditation Day to be celebrated on 21 December each year, it is our intention and hope to raise awareness about meditation worldwide [...] it serves as a foundation to further promote and better understand the practice and benefits of meditation for the health and well-being of people around the world, and possibly as a regular practice.”²¹

The resolution (A/RES/79/137) was adopted by the 193 Member States by consensus, with more than 70 Member States serving as co-sponsors. Following its adoption, the resolution provides a normative framework for the observance of World Meditation Day across the United Nations system and beyond.

21. <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1b/k1b8s0xws2> (last visited December 15, 2025)

Resolution
A/RES/79/137

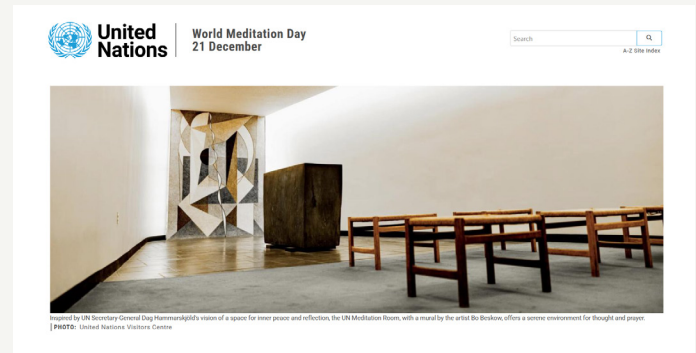


In celebration of the first World Meditation Day on 21 December 2024, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, said:

“At a time when our world faces unprecedented challenges, meditation helps us manage stress, improve focus, and foster mutual understanding [...] The values underpinning meditation are fundamental to compassionate human rights advocacy and effective diplomacy.”²²



United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, World Meditation Day Message



World Meditation Day Website

The official United Nations website dedicated to World Meditation Day serves as a central platform for information on the resolution, its objectives, and related observances.

22. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/volker-f%C3%BCrk-5a0a9b2b3_worldmeditationdayactivity-7276129357243269120-hBEe (last visited December 15, 2025)

Meditation and Contemplation across the United Nations Workforce

The World Meditation Day resolution (A/RES/79/137) recalls the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health²³. Such well-being depends on supportive conditions, as resilience requires organizational backing across professional, public, and personal spheres²⁴. The United Nations Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy for 2024 and Beyond provides a system-wide framework to cultivate such conditions across the United Nations.

At the United Nations, institutional well-being is essential for fulfilling mandates. Baseline data and subsequent studies have shown that United Nations system personnel are exposed to multiple psychosocial risk factors at work, leading to high rates of negative mental health symptoms reported²⁵. In addition to emphasizing respectful workplaces and mental health support, the strategy identifies evidence-based mindfulness interventions as potential components of well-being initiatives.²⁶



The United Nations Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy for 2024 and Beyond affirms the importance of promoting good mental health

In this context, OHCHR convened the United and Present - Global Solutions from Within conference from 9 to 11 December 2025²⁷. The conference marked a recent milestone in the integration of meditative and contemplative practices within the United Nations system. It brought together representatives from Member States, United Nations agencies and programmes, including the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), as well as from academia and diverse contemplative and meditative traditions. It was aligned with the 2025 Human Rights Day Campaign, Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials, a campaign committed to highlighting that human rights are positive, attainable, and essential to our everyday lives.²⁸

23. United Nations. (2024, November 29). World Meditation Day: Draft resolution A/79/L.27. United Nations General Assembly. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/L.27> (last visited December 15, 2025)

24. NOVEMBER 2025 - UN Today (last visited December 15, 2025)

25. Strategy | United Nations (last visited December 15, 2025)

26. https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_system_mental_health_and_well_being_strategy_for_2024.pdf (last visited December 15, 2025)

27. EN_agenda_conference_united_and_present (last visited December 15, 2025)

28. Our Everyday Essentials | OHCHR (last visited December 15, 2025)

HUMAN RIGHTS LIVE
IN THE MOMENTS
WE SHARE EVERY DAY



After two days at the United Nations Office at Geneva's Palais des Nations, the conference concluded with a public event in collaboration with the Geneva University Hospitals (HUG) and the University of Geneva Faculty of Medicine.²⁹ In her opening remarks, the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner of Human Rights, Nada Al Nashif, underlined that contemplative practices, grounded in science and human traditions, can contribute to more peaceful and resilient societies.³⁰

Taken together, these developments within the United Nations system are indicative of broader trends observed across regions in the recognition and application of meditative and contemplative practices in public life.



Human Rights Day 2025 Campaign and panellists at the United and Present Conference



Public event in collaboration with Geneva University Hospitals (HUG) and University of Geneva (UNIGE) Faculty of Medicine

29. [La pleine conscience dans un monde en mutation - conférence - HUG](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)

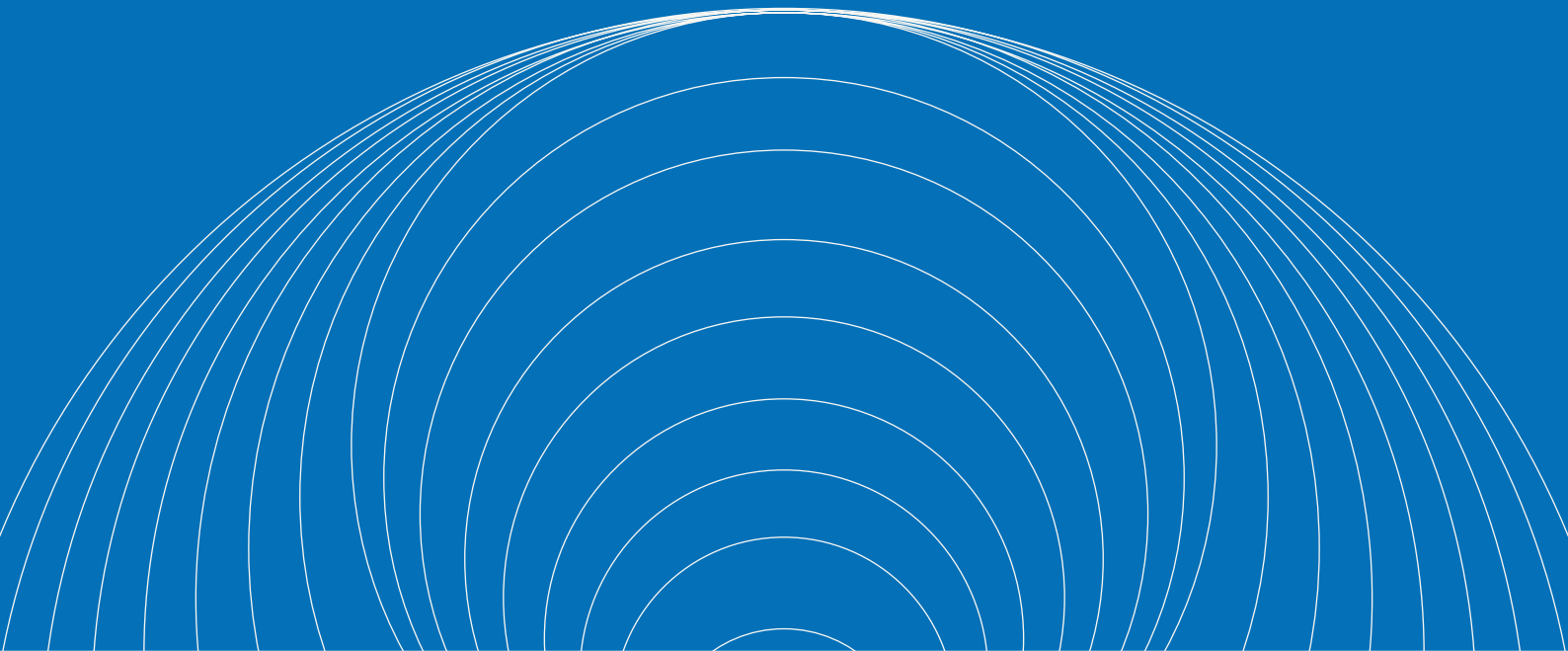
30. [11 décembre 2025: la pleine conscience dans un monde en mutation - Faculté de médecine - UNIGE](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)

[W]ars begin in the minds of men, and in those minds love and compassion would have built the defenses of peace.³¹

U Thant, 3rd United Nations Secretary-General

When we meditate, we quiet our minds, center our thoughts, and cultivate compassion and respect. This personal transformation has a ripple effect, inspiring harmony in our families, our communities and beyond. It effectively lays the foundation for peace in ourselves and towards our surroundings.³²

Philemon Yang, 79th President of the General Assembly



31. *Character Sketches: U Thant* by Brian Urquhart | [UN News](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)

32. <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1y/k1ybsb2aea> [07:45-10:04] (last visited December 15, 2025)

Meditation Worldwide

Beyond the United Nations system, meditation continues to be practiced globally across diverse cultural, institutional, and societal contexts. Across regions, meditative and contemplative practices are reflected in public governance, health systems, education, and community-based traditions, illustrating both their universality and their contextual diversity.

Estimates suggest that 200-500 million people regularly engage in meditative practices worldwide.³³ In addition to enduring cultural traditions, digitalization has further increased people's access to different types of meditative practices, independent of their physical location.³⁴

33. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/meditation-day> (last visited December 15, 2025)

34. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/meditationday> (last visited December 15, 2025)



Guatemala has a rich cultural heritage of contemplative and spiritual practices, reflecting its diversity and historical depth. In the Mayan tradition, ancestral rituals with meditative components have been passed down from generation to generation.



In Sri Lanka, Buddhist forest meditation monasteries, complexes that date back to the 5th to 10th centuries AD, are a physical testament to the historical importance of meditation in Buddhism.³⁵

Several United Nations Member States integrate meditative practices into the public sector. Initiatives span across both local and national levels of governance and extend into areas such as public administration, healthcare, and education.³⁶

35. [Buddhist Meditation Monasteries of Ancient Sri Lanka - UNESCO World Heritage Centre](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)

36. In July 2025, OHCHR sent a note verbale inviting contributions from Member States and extended networks linked to meditative and contemplative practices. This report reflects these submissions, which are complemented by additional public sources. The examples presented are illustrative and non-exhaustive and do not constitute an assessment or endorsement of specific national policies or programmes.

Meditative Practices in Governance

Within governance and public administration, meditative and contemplative practices are increasingly being integrated as supportive approaches to stress management, ethical leadership, and balanced decision-making.

Several governments, including those of Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Türkiye, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, have introduced or piloted mindfulness-informed training initiatives aimed at supporting stress reduction, self-awareness, and decision-making capacities. Also in France, members of Parliament have been trained in mindfulness.

In Brazil, state security institutions, in collaboration with the Centro Mente Aberta – Brazilian Centre for Mindfulness and Health Promotion – have implemented mindfulness-based training programmes for civil and military police forces, as well as for members of the judiciary.



Course on meditation and contemplative practices observed by French public officials



Judicial police officers from the Regional Labor Court of Bahia (TRT-BA) participating in a mindfulness meditation session

In Kenya, the Naivasha GK Prison in Nairobi has implemented a mindfulness training programme to enhance the well-being of inmates and employees.³⁷

and Municipalities has been introduced, integrating resilience, compassion, and excellence training grounded in mindfulness into local government structures.



In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Oxford Mindfulness Centre has collaborated with Parliament, engaging Members of Parliament, Lords, and staff in mindfulness initiatives. Within the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), well-being is recognized as a cornerstone of a healthy workplace culture.

In Bhutan, mindfulness has been referenced as a guiding principle informing national development approaches. The development of the Mindfulness City of Gelephu has been presented as a systemic approach to social, economic, and urban planning. The initiative references the integration of Bhutanese cultural elements within urban development, including the preservation of agricultural land and wildlife areas, alongside the incorporation of traditional farming practices and contemporary agricultural science. These approaches are situated within Bhutan's broader policy discourse on holistic well-being and draw on cultural and historical traditions associated with the country.

Since 2022, mindfulness-based programmes have been progressively integrated into Türkiye's public sector in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. The ministry holds an annual workshop to teach ministry employees introductory mindfulness-based meditation practices, reaching approximately 500 participants.

Multiple Indian state governments sanction special leave for employees who wish to attend Vipassana Meditation courses. This initiative has been implemented for many years, with records confirming that the special leave was officially recognized in the state of Maharashtra in 1996.³⁸

In Croatia, more than 1,600 professionals - including civil servants, judges, prosecutors, police officers, teachers, healthcare and social workers, and local government officials - have completed mindfulness-informed attention and compassion-based leadership training through the Mindfulness Initiative Croatia. At the parliamentary level, the concept of Caring Cities



37. [Kenyan Prisons mindful leaders | The Mindfulness Initiative](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)

38. [1996-08-07-MH-Gen-Eng.pdf](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)

Meditative Practices in Public Health Systems



The initiative Vive SALUDableMENTE in Mexico recommends taking short breaks of approximately five minutes to practice meditation, considering it an effective tool for daily emotion management and stress reduction.

In the field of public health, meditative and contemplative practices are increasingly referenced as complementary approaches within broader mental health and well-being strategies.

Several national health agencies, including Guatemala's Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance, India's Ministry of Ayush, and the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS), promote meditation as an accessible practice to support mental well-being. These initiatives illustrate how meditation has been referenced within broader health strategies as a complementary practice associated with aspects of population well-being. Similarly, Chile's Public Health Mindfulness Network promotes mindfulness-based interventions within healthcare systems. It brings together practitioners from diverse disciplines who apply compassion-based methods in clinical settings, health education, and community outreach.



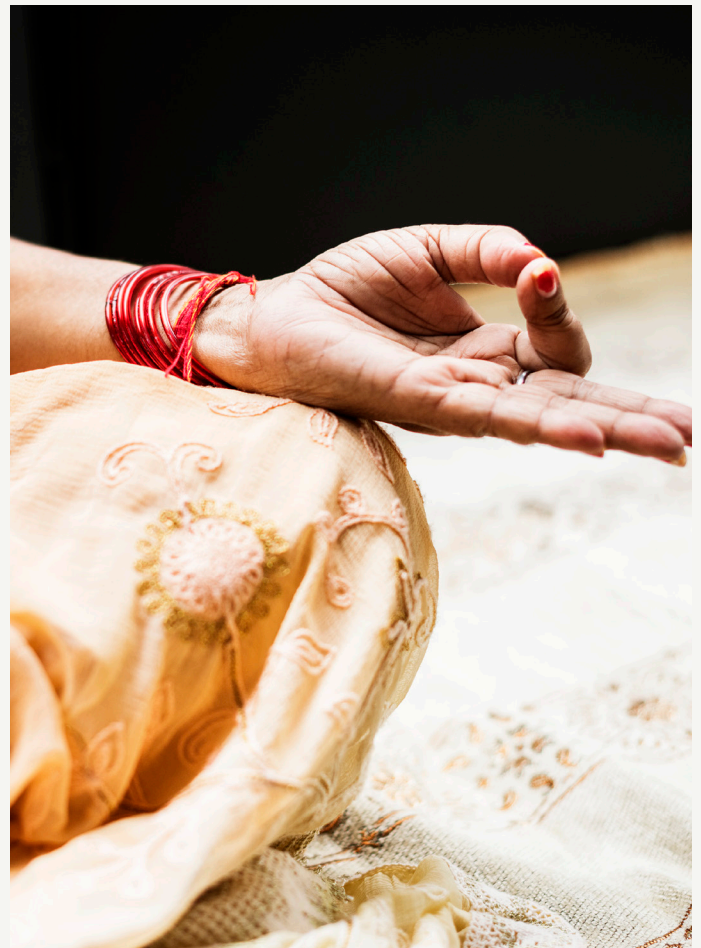
Moreover, Peru's health service providers support mindfulness meditation as part of its complementary medicine approach.



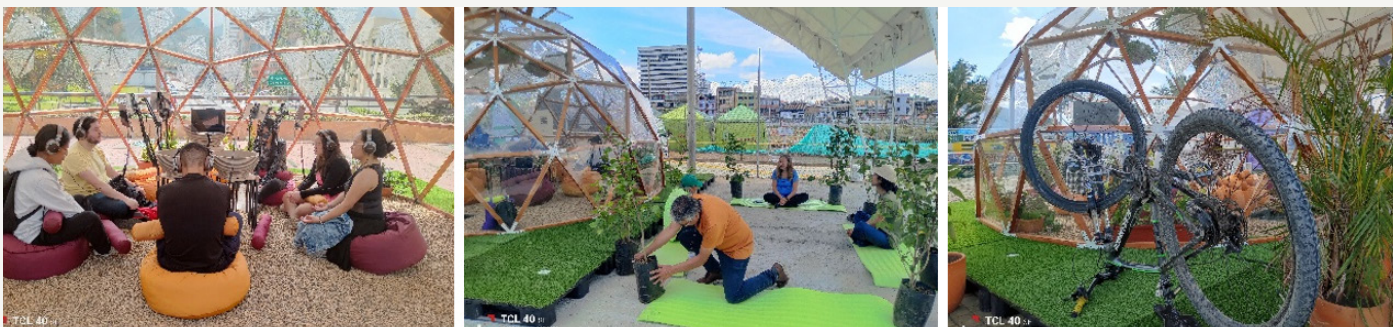
Mindfulness meditation employed in Peru's complementary medicine approach

In 2025, the Indian Ministry of Ayush organized the National Ayush Mission (NAM) Conclave 2025. The two-day event brought together Ayush experts with researchers, innovators, policymakers, and health professionals to evaluate how traditional Indian medicine systems can be integrated into healthcare. The event featured a ministerial roundtable and expert sessions, as well as guided yoga and meditation sessions for delegates.

The Mindfulness Centre at the State University of Rio de Janeiro runs the MEDITASUS project, which trains public health professionals across the state to deliver mindfulness programs within primary health care services located in Rio's favelas (low-income urban communities).



The Bogotá Culture + Conscious Strategy of Colombia has been presented as an initiative that references embodied awareness in efforts to promote coexistence, diversity, and physical, emotional, and mental well-being. The strategy includes activities such as yoga, meditation, tai chi, and artistic expressions, including dance and music-related practices, which are framed as supporting self-awareness and social coexistence, in line with constitutional and human rights principles.



As part of the Bogotá Culture + Conscious Strategy, the Meditation Station in Bogotá attracted approximately 2500 people over 5 months in 2024

In the United States of America, the National Cancer Institute allocated funding to studying the potential positive impact of contemplative practices on people with cancer. To help patients cope with their treatment and improve quality of life, MD Anderson Cancer Centre in Houston, Texas, offers meditation practices based on the Yungdrung Bon tradition.



Weekly classes at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX

Alongside institutional public health initiatives, long-standing Indigenous and community-based health systems continue to integrate contemplative and relational practices as core elements of well-being. Health approaches of the Kanaka Maoli, the Indigenous people of Hawai'i, for example, have long been rooted in contemplative, holistic, and relational worldviews. Health is often understood as a sacred, dynamic force sustained through mana - a concept encompassing spiritual energy, character, and divine power - and through holistic practices that nurture harmony among mind, body, and spirit, while maintaining balance with nature, the spiritual realm, and the community.³⁹

38. [native-hawaiian-and-indigenous-health-program.pdf](#) (last visited December 15, 2025)

Meditative Practices in Education

Within education systems, similar approaches have been introduced to support emotional regulation, mental health, and learning environments across different age groups.

In Guatemala, the Ministry of Education supports mindfulness-informed initiatives aimed at strengthening emotional self-regulation and promoting mental well-being among students and educators.

In France, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research engaged on the topic and commissioned a note on mindfulness meditation in higher education.

In New Zealand, the mental health initiative *Pause Breathe Smile* is offered to children aged five to twelve with the aim of equipping children with preventative well-being strategies from an early age on.

Sati Pasala, roughly translated as “Mindfulness School,” is a community-based initiative in Sri Lanka that has been presented as offering mindfulness-related activities for children in a non-sectarian context. The initiative is open to participants from diverse backgrounds and is directed at students, parents, educators, and communities at the local

and international levels, including through online modalities.

At the level of higher education and research, meditative and contemplative practices are also reflected in academic programmes and institutional initiatives. The Centro Mente Aberta, Brazilian Centre for Mindfulness and Health Promotion, was established in 2011 at the Escola Paulista de Medicina, Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP). It has been described as an academic centre in Latin America with a focus on meditation- and mindfulness-based approaches to health promotion, research, and public policy.





Higher education institutions in countries such as Chile and Türkiye offer postgraduate programmes with a focus on mindfulness and contemplative practices in fields including psychology, education, and the health sciences.

In honour of World Meditation Day on 21 December 2024, the Technological University of Northern Aguascalientes (UTNA) in Mexico held an event aimed at promoting the emotional well-being of the teaching community, highlighting the widespread presence of meditative practices, transcending cultures, traditions and contexts. It also sought to underline the potential role of contemplative practices in supporting the well-being of teaching staff, including in relation to burnout prevention. Similarly, meditation-related activities were offered by the Technological University of the Hidalguense Sierra throughout 2025.



Overall, these examples across regional and public sector contexts illustrate different ways in which meditative practices are referenced in relation to individual and collective well-being and human development. Together with initiatives by civil society organizations and community-based advocacy, these examples illustrate the widespread presence of meditative practices. While approaches vary according to context, culture, and purpose, they reflect a shared interest in supporting well-being, awareness, and human development in ways that are responsive to local needs and priorities.



Meditation-related activities were held at the Technological University of the Sierra Hidalguense (UTSH) in 2025 in Mexico



108 Sun Salutations to Welcome a New Season at IE University

Welcoming the new season through **108 Sun Salutations**, a moving meditation rooted in tradition and intention. The practice symbolized renewal, presence, and the cyclical nature of change, offering a moment to reconnect body, breath, and awareness.



Meditation in Higher Education at IE University

At **IE University**, meditation is offered as a practical tool to support the well-being and emotional regulation of students, staff, and faculty, helping them navigate academic and professional demands with greater clarity and balance.



***Acknowledging the universality of meditation,
practised in all regions of the world.***

General Assembly Resolution A/RES/79/137 on World Meditation Day

*Today, [meditation] is embraced worldwide, transcending its spir-
itual origins to become **a universal tool for personal well-being
and mental health.***

United Nations Website on World Meditation Day

Conclusions

As highlighted throughout this report, meditative and contemplative practices are ancient and have long been present across cultures and societies. Since its early years, the United Nations has reflected aspects of these practices within its institutional life, including through traditions such as the minute of silence, the creation of physical spaces for reflection, and symbolic practices.



This report further illustrates how meditative and contemplative practices continue to be referenced across diverse cultural, institutional, and societal contexts worldwide, including within sectors such as governance, public health, education, and community life, in ways that support individual and collective well-being.

Taken together, these perspectives underscore meditation as an enduring human practice that the United Nations has engaged with over time, given its relevance to multilateral cooperation, human rights, humanitarian action, sustainability, and global mental health and well-being, particularly in the context of complex and interrelated global challenges.

Conclusions and Observations

Acknowledging the universality of meditation, practiced in all regions of the world

Meditation has been recognized as a human practice present across cultures, traditions, and worldviews, as affirmed by General Assembly resolution A/RES/79/137 on World Meditation Day. This universality provides a shared foundation for reflection, awareness, and inner resources that support individual and collective well-being, human dignity, social cohesion, and multilateral engagement. In this sense, meditation is not simply a universal practice, but it can also serve as a unifying one.

Recognizing meditation as foundational to multilateralism, human rights, humanitarian affairs, and peacebuilding

Meditative and contemplative practices are associated with qualities relevant to the mandates of the United Nations, including ethical discernment, compassion, presence, and relational awareness. These qualities are fundamental to effective

diplomacy, human rights advocacy, humanitarian affairs, and peacebuilding, particularly in contexts marked by complexity, polarization, protracted crises, and interconnected global challenges.

Advancing mental health, well-being, and sustainability

In line with the *United Nations Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy for 2024 and Beyond*, meditation-informed approaches are referenced as supporting individual and collective resilience, psychosocial well-being, and institutional duty of care. By strengthening human capacities for awareness, regulation, and connection, such approaches may also contribute to more sustainable ways of working, benefiting not only United Nations personnel but also the well-being of people and the planet.

Integrating contemplative traditions and scientific evidence within institutional practice

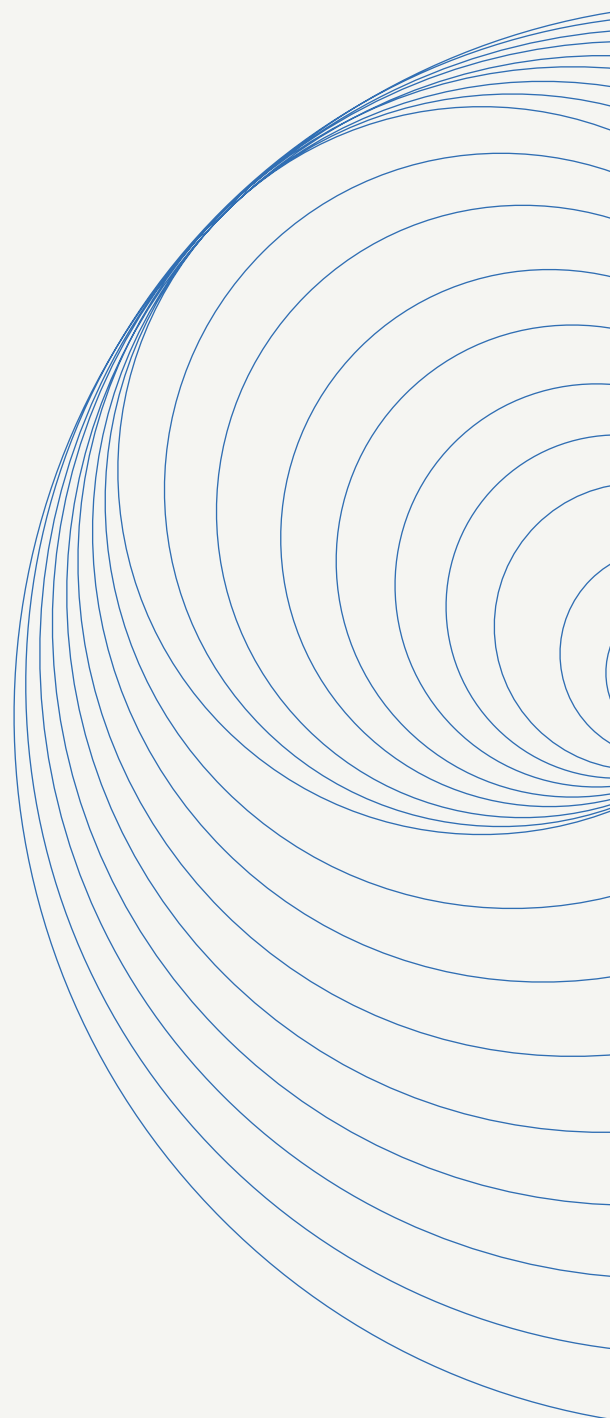
Engagement with long-standing contemplative traditions, alongside growing scientific evidence, enables an integrated understanding of meditation that bridges cultural knowledge and research-based insights. This integration may inform organizational cultures, leadership practices, and public-sector policies in ways that support well-being, ethical governance, and sustainable institutional performance, consistent with United Nations values and standards.

Supporting knowledge-sharing through an evolving United Nations reporting process

This report is intended as the first in an evolving series of periodic reports, to be coordinated by OHCHR, documenting how meditative and contemplative practices are reflected across the United Nations system and in broader global contexts. These reports are not designed to provide comprehensive mappings, but to provide illustrative snapshots that support learning, dialogue, and reflection over time, contributing to sustained attention to well-being, mental and physical health, and the human dimensions of sustainable development.

Advancing World Meditation Day

In line with a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, the resolution proclaiming World Meditation Day invites all interested actors to observe World Meditation Day and to further develop its vision.





Photograph by Matthieu Ricard



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
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