

## SPEECH AT DIWALI CELEBRATION

V&A WATERFRONT

11 OCTOBER 2009

Good day (INSERT PROTOCOL)

It humbles me to be associated with a festival that goes back over 5 000 years. I also feel privileged and proud that our country is blessed with so much diversity and richness of cultures and traditions.

In both Christianity and Hinduism, we dedicate times of the year to the renewal of our lives and of our faith. We seek to reflect on what has gone before and to reconnect with the light which lies within us and which is at the heart of all that is. Christians know this as the Light of Light and can appreciate and share in the ways in which at Diwali you celebrate your awareness of the inner light. Together, and through the celebration of our festivals, we can increase our consciousness of the ways in which light can triumph over darkness and good over evil. We can recommit ourselves to be light in the world.

How important it is in this Diwali and for Christians in the coming Christmas season, that we hold to this vision of justice and transformation for all, especially for the poor and excluded, in the face of the present economic crisis in which the temptation is to fall back upon ourselves and our own interests at their expense.

My hope for the year ahead is that in this spirit of looking to the light, we shall be able to find reconciliation where there has been division and hurt; to work for peace and the rejection of violence; and that together we may appreciate and enjoy each other's festivals as a common sign to the world of our commitment to mutual goodwill and faith in each other.

