

**Keynote Address by High Commissioner at the Exhibition on
From Shunya to Ananta (Zero to Infinity) — The Indian
Civilisation's Contribution to Mathematics**

(9 September 2026, UN Office Nairobi)

Excellencies,

Director General UNON, H.E. Zainab Bangura,

Distinguished representatives of the United Nations,

Visiting delegates from different capitals

and Members of the diplomatic community

Good morning!

I welcome you all to the United Nations Office in Nairobi for the interactive exhibition *From Shunya to Ananta — Zero to Infinity: The Indian Civilisation's Contribution to Mathematics* being organised by High Commission of India. This exhibition celebrates mathematics as a shared language of humanity—one that has crossed cultures, shaped science, and transformed the modern world.

This exhibition has been put up at a very apt time with International Day of Literacy on 8 September and International Day of Science, Technology, and Innovation for the South on 16 September.

In May this year, this exhibition was inaugurated at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in the presence of India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, and senior dignitaries from the United Nations system. It was warmly appreciated by delegates of Member States and other visitors.

Friends,

At the heart of this story is zero or *shunya*, —an idea that represents nothing, yet makes almost everything possible. By giving zero both a symbol and a place in the decimal place-value system, Indian mathematics helped transform counting into calculation and calculation into a universal tool of thought.

From this foundation grew a remarkable tradition. Ancient Indian texts preserved sophisticated geometric ideas; Aryabhata advanced astronomy, algebra, trigonometry, and approximations of pi; Brahmagupta formulated rules for zero and negative numbers; Bhaskara II explored algebra and astronomical computation; and later Indian scholars developed work on infinite series—ideas that point toward *ananta*, infinity.

This journey from zero to infinity is more than a historical timeline; it is a civilisational story of curiosity, abstraction, and application. It reminds us that knowledge grows when societies ask practical questions, preserve intellectual traditions, and remain open to wonder.

It is fitting that we gather under the auspices of the United Nations, because mathematics belongs to all humanity. In celebrating India's contribution, we also recognise the global exchange of ideas that has carried knowledge across regions, languages, and generations.

This exhibition honours more than two millennia of Indian mathematical thought, highlights its relevance to contemporary technologies, and encourages dialogue among civilisations. It invites us to see mathematics as creative, meaningful, and full of possibility.

I thank you all for joining us today to celebrate this proud chapter of Indian heritage as a contribution to humanity's shared treasury of knowledge, and renew our commitment to education, research, and international cooperation.

I invite you all to spend a few minutes going through this interactive exhibition and join us for some tea/coffee.

Thank you!