



CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE For UN Vesak Day 2019

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of UNESCO, I am deeply honoured to send this congratulatory message to celebrate this very special 16th edition of the United Nations Day of Vesak, hosted by Viet Nam, to mark the birth, enlightenment and passing away of Lord Buddha.

This United Nations Day of Vesak is a moment to reflect on the significance of Buddhist teachings for sustainable world peace and social justice.

In a world that is deeply interconnected but still divided by unacceptable inequalities, conflict and rising intolerance, Buddhist teachings encourage to act with awareness, generosity and solidarity. These are the values that inspired the renowned 13th century Emperor of Viet Nam, Trần Nhân Tông, to found the True Lâm School of Zen Buddhism that continues to pervade everyday life across Viet Nam and beyond. On a wider scale, these are values that play a major part in the mindset we must cultivate as an antidote to hatred and injustice, and as an approach to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - an ambitious roadmap that aspires to leave no one behind.

From the Sacred Mountain of Yên Tử to the serenity of the Tràng An Cultural Landscape, Viet Nam is home to ancient Buddhist heritage that carries outstanding universal value. This international day of Vesak offers an auspicious occasion to reflect on the values that are the foundations for building peace and sustainable societies. In this spirit, I wish to thank the Government of Viet Nam, the National Viet Nam Buddhist Sangha and the International Council for Day of Vesak for their leadership and vision.

On the occasion of Vesak, I express my warmest greetings to all Buddhists around the world and to all those promoting compassion, understanding and respect as the basis for peace.

Thank you.

Director-General of UNESCO, Ms Audrey Azoulay