



## CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE For UN Vesak Day 2019

As the Vice- Chancellor of the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka, I am honoured and privileged to forward a congratulatory message for the Sixteenth United Nations Day of Vesak Celebrations – 2019 in Vietnam. As a country with Theravada Buddhist tradition and culture, Sri Lanka began Vesak celebrations 25 centuries ago according to the Sri Lankan chronicles, not only as a festival but also as a commemoration and gratitude to the Lord Gautama Buddha who completely dedicated his life for the emancipation of suffering of all beings out of compassion and loving kindness.

Buddhism in the present global context has become a very influential teaching especially as an alternative system of knowledge for the issues of humanity and environment. It is not an exaggeration to say that it was the Gautama Buddha who emphasized the interdependency of all things in nature for the first time in the human history. All types of existence either physical or non-physical sustain in accordance with the theory of dependent origination according to Buddhism. Thus the Buddha's approach to nature is based on the attitude of wholeness. 'Sabbe satta' (all beings) in Pali is a significant usage in the Buddhist Doctrine. This as an umbrella term includes every types of beings in the universe and enumerates their inter dependency. Therefore, the Buddhist doctrine goes beyond the so called globalization theory and focuses on the universality. This implies two important facts relevant to the conference this year. Firstly, Buddhism as an enriched teaching is applicable even to the modern issues as it possesses the characteristic of eternality. Secondly, Buddhism is not confined only to humanity but to all beings.

This year Vesak celebration as well as the academic conference expect to quest for Buddhist knowledge on the concept of sustainability which is the main concept given in the UN Sustainable Development Goals expected to achieve in 2030. Sustainability in each and every aspect according to Buddhism can be a reality only through a collective effort. Due to the isolation and individualism prevailed in today's global world, though there are inter connections the whole world has been divided into many based on their identities. Differences based on the nationality, religion, culture, economy, caste, class and so on have created turmoil in the world. While accepting and respecting these differences and identities, humans today must be aware that the survival is not the existence of the individual. Thus sustainability can be achieved if and only if all humans collectively contribute to it. I think this would be the message that should be conveyed to the whole world from this year's Vesak Celebration in Vietnam.

I would like to congratulate the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (NVBS) for hosting the UN Vesak Celebrations for the third time in Vietnam. I hope this year's conference would immensely contribute to the world of knowledge by providing solutions to crises in the modern societies. I wish all the success for the United Nations Day of Vesak Celebration 2019!

Dr. Waruni Tennakoon  
Vice - Chancellor  
The Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka