

Congratulatory Message
To the 10th United Nations Day of Vesak Celebrations

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I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations on the 10th United Nations Day of Vesak International Conference and Celebrations.

Just as suggested by this year's theme, 'Education and Global Citizenship: Buddhist Perspective', internationalization has prevailed since the Industrial Revolution in every field such as politics, economy, religion, culture, science and sport. Whether good or bad, human activities in modern times have become global, and such trend of the times produced the word 'globalism'. Today, everything moves, develops and changes rapidly and dynamically on a global scale, and things are very unstable in a sense. Involved in the intense dynamism, each individual is irresistibly played with like a ship in the raging sea. Then, what has caused this troubling situation? It is without doubt an individual person, because any nation, any group or any organization is composed of individual persons.

According to the living place, an individual is a villager or a townsperson or a citizen, and, at the national level, the individual is a citizen of a nation. This much everybody knows and is aware of. However, in the age of globalism, it is not enough; any individual needs to have awareness of a global citizen. Exactly because living in the unstable age, any individual has to think and act with awareness and responsibility as a global citizen, and make efforts so that the world will not get destabilized and all the human beings can live peacefully. It is a duty as a global citizen. On the other hand, because of his or her citizenship, any individual has global citizens' rights such as right to life, right to education and right to human dignity. These rights have to be secured and assured.

Reasonably, such a duty and rights are indivisible and cannot be separated. Anybody owes a duty to guarantee and respect rights of others so that his or her own rights may be guaranteed and respected, but it is not the case today. We are always asserting our rights for our own benefit and neglecting our duties. For example, if the people living in the upper river area use the water only for their need and make it dirty without consideration of other users, and if, as a result, it becomes impossible for the people living in the lower river area to use the water any more, it will surely end up with conflicts between them. They are caused because one side thinks only of its own

interest and asserts its rights, while it doesn't take the other side into consideration and neglects its duties to keep the quality of the water good. Such things are happening today on a global level. Climate change can be counted as such. Though more scientific study is necessary, we can say that excessively egoistic economic activities on an individual level as well as on a nation level have caused the climate change at a global scale.

Now, human beings are expected to have awareness, consciousness and norm as global citizens. For the education of them, I am very sure Buddhism can play a certain important role. Thinking ways of Buddhism, methods of Buddhism and resources of Buddhism must be very useful for such education. I don't know whether my opinion above accords with the theme of this year's conference, but I sincerely expect meaningful discussions and results from them.

I extend my best wishes to the fruitful accomplishments and success of the 10th United Nations Day of Vesak International Conference and Celebrations.