



Buddhist Federation of Norway
Postboks 9340 Grønland
0135 Oslo
Norway

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Message from Buddhist Federation of Norway

Venerable Sangha leaders
Dear friends in the Dharma

The theme for the 7th United Nations Day of Vesak Celebrations here in Thailand is: "Global Recovery – the Buddhist Perspective". Looking at the situation of the world today what strikes us most is the immensity of the changes that has taken place during our lifetime. More than ever before, our time is a period of accelerating changes. More than ever before is it true to say that tomorrow will definitely be different from today. More than in any other part of the world this can be observed here in Asia, the home of Buddhism and the continent where most Buddhists live.

Changes have taken place in the fields of economy, technology, politics and culture, and affect every field of human life. They have also affected profoundly the situation of Buddhism. In some respects they offer new opportunities for Buddhism: improvements in education and new media of communication facilitating the dissemination of knowledge about the Dharma. On the other hand modernisation has created a situation where Buddhism more than ever before has to compete with other worldviews for the allegiance of the masses. Also, the blessings of economic growth may also give rise to the curse of consumerism: making individuals pursue wealth as the primary objective in life rather than the spiritual goals that the Dharma points at. Increasing global communication has provided opportunities for making Buddhism known all over the world. On the other hand it has also led to Buddhism being challenged on its home ground by other religions which are often better equipped than traditional Buddhism in effectively promoting their messages.

How are Buddhists to respond to such profound changes? Paradoxically I think the most important response is to remind ourselves that on a deeper level nothing has changed: In spite of the glittering views of progress provided by scientific and technological advances, illustrated by the metropolises of modern Asia, the fundamental facts facing human beings are still the same: sickness, old age and death. We still need to make sense of the fact that in the end the worldly achievements of every human being will come to nothing. This is a fundamental fact of life that we always need to remind ourselves about. Buddhism has captured the hearts of men and women because it has provided them with hope in the face of these fundamental facts of life. With a hope founded on the possibility of achievements beyond those of worldly life men and women have set out to transform their own lives and in doing that also to transform the lives of others and even to transform the world.

These reflections bring us to the theme of this conference: Global Recovery. It is by being true to the heritage of the Dharma that the Buddhist community can contribute to the recovery of the world. Every individual has a sphere of influence, large or small, where our actions may effect changes for better or for worse. By conscientiously adhering to the standards of the Dharma we can definitely become forces for goodness in the world. The accumulative effect of each individual being such a force for goodness may be immense. But by working together to our full capacity in all spheres of society the impact of our efforts may be strengthened manifold. This is what makes a conference such as the UNDV conference so

important. Studying how our capacities for effecting global recovery through activities in fields such as education, mental training, ecology and so on, we learn from each other and, even more importantly, we get inspiration from each other to strengthen our motivation to take upon ourselves the task of effecting a sorely needed global recovery.

I therefore heartily congratulate the organisers, The Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and Inner Trip Reiyukai International, for their efforts and contributions to make this meaningful event a reality.

Egil Lothe

President Buddhist Federation of Norway