



**The 8th United Nations Day of Vesak Celebrations 2011/B.E 2554
Congratulatory message from Buddhist Federation of Norway**

Egil Lothe

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It is a great pleasure for me as president of the Buddhist Federation of Norway to congratulate the organisers of the 8th United Nations Day of Vesak Celebrations taking place in Thailand this year. The Buddhist Federation of Norway, representing the diversity of most of the Buddhist communities in our own country, appreciates highly the many times greater Buddhist diversity seen at the celebration of the United Nation Day of Vesak.

Having come to know about the strong commitment and support from various Thai governments to the United Nation Day of Vesak celebrations I would also like to express my gratitude to the country of Thailand. This year the celebration of United Nation Day of Vesak celebrations coincides with the year of the 84th Birthday of His Majesty the King of Thailand. His Majesty has during his long reign exemplified in an outstanding manner how the values of Buddhism can be implemented in the life of a nation. His Majesty's commitment to governance based on Buddhist principles has very deservedly earned him respect from the world Buddhist community. We will therefore also express our feelings of gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty the King of Thailand.

Having participated in the United Nation Day of Vesak conferences every year since their inception in 2004 I have observed the dedication and hard work of the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University lead by its Rector, Most Venerable Dharmakosajarn. This dedication and hard work has been crowned with success in bringing Buddhists from all over the world together as well as in increasing the visibility of Buddhism on the world stage and also in initiating a number of concrete projects in the field of Buddhist cooperation.

One such project is the ongoing Common Buddhist Texts project which aims to compile scriptures from the three traditions of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana into one common text to be disseminated widely in order to make the Dharma known in its essence as well as in its diversity. A project such as this has not been implemented before and stands as a testimony to the broadminded and inclusive attitude of the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and its rector Most Venerable Dharmakosajarn. It also serves as an example of the importance of utilising Buddhist scholarship in the dissemination of the teachings of the Buddha.

The world needs the teachings of the Buddha. First and foremost every human being needs the teachings of the Buddha to transform themselves from worldly beings into liberated beings able to express their freedom in actions of wisdom and compassion. As beings living in this world we are interconnected. Our inner being is reflected in our actions. Our actions

are reflected in the world we share together. For better or for worse our thoughts, words, and deeds affect the situation of other beings. Buddhist spirituality is therefore not only inward looking. It also looks outward at humanity at large and how we as individuals relate to the community of living beings in the world.

The theme of this year's conference is therefore not accidental. "Buddhist Virtues in Socio-Economic Development" may sound like words from two different worlds. In fact they are very much interconnected. How far can we really develop if we lack the Buddhist virtues of compassion and friendliness, of generosity and peacefulness? Can we really create a civilised world if the way we relate to each other is not very different from the law of the jungle?

Talking about Buddhist virtues is easy, really understanding them less so, and practicing them may often be difficult indeed. We therefore need all the help we can give each other in strengthening our understanding and our resolve to practice the Buddhist Virtues for the benefit of the whole world.

Coming together as we do on the United Nation Day of Vesak, due to the hospitality of our Thai hosts, we are granted a valuable opportunity to reflect on and to be inspired by the Teachings of the Buddha. It is up to us as speakers or listeners to contribute to the best of our capability in sharing our knowledge and experience with the world Buddhist community being represented here. The world may not listen to our words but it will surely notice whether we contribute significantly to make this world a better place for us all.

May we therefore succeed in making this great event into an experience of learning and inspiration through which we may become more motivated and more capable to transform the world as well as ourselves.

Yours in the Dharma

(sign.)

Egil Lothe

President Buddhist Federation of Norway