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Remarks
by
H.E. Mr. Virachai Virameteekul
Minister of Science and Technology
at the Closing Ceremony of
the United Nations Day of Vesak Conference

14 May 2011

UN Conference Hall, Bangkok

Your Holiness,

Most Venerable Leaders and Members of the
Sangha (สังฆะ),

Excellencies,

H.E. Jayaratne (จา-ยา-รัต-ตะ-เน), Prime Minister of
Sri Lanka

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. **As a Buddhist, I feel completely humbled to be in presence of an extraordinary audience such as this. On behalf of the Royal Thai Government, it is indeed a great honour for me to join all of you again for the second consecutive year at the closing ceremony of the International Conference celebrating the United Nations Day of Vesak (เวส-สัณ).** My warmest welcome to you all.
2. **The past few days have provided members of the Sangha (สังฆะ), prominent scholars, government representatives and Buddhists from all 6 inhabitable continents to gather and discuss ways and means that will**

enhance the role of Buddhist principles in the social dimension.

3. (Having the honour to talk to venerable Hansa (พระพรหม) a little,) I am glad to hear that this year's Conference is constructive and successful no less than the previous year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. As you all are well aware, the Vesak Day is relevant to three significant occasions in the Lord Buddha's life as it marks his birth, his attainment of enlightenment, and his passing away.

5. During Lord Buddha's lifetime, his teachings were already beneficial to a large number of people far and wide. Today, these same set of teachings are even more meaningful as they travel further and faster, creating inner peace in the mind of people.

6. Given its importance, the United Nations General Assembly, thus, adopted a resolution in 1999, recognizing the Vesak Day as an important day, internationally. Since then, various countries take turn to celebrate the United Nations Day of Vesak both at the UN Headquarters in New York, and at its offices around the world.

7. And once again, Thailand is honoured to host the international conference in conjunction to the Day of Vesak in Bangkok.

8. This year's theme is "Buddhist Virtues in Socio-Economic Development", and I must say that it cannot be more timely. Nowadays, there are problems pressing mankind from every side. We constantly hear that social crisis, economic crisis and environmental crisis occurs in every corner across the globe.

9. In an era like this, I think moral and ethics are called for more than ever. And I further

believe that here, Lord Buddha's teaching, especially the doctrine of non-violence or "*Ahimsa*" (อะ-หิง-สา) and compassion or "*Metta-Karuna*" (เมตตา กรุณา) can be "the path" that leads our society to true peace and harmony.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. The very first sermon of Lord Buddha is the principle of moderation : the "middle path", or "*Majjhima Patipada*" (มัค-ชิ-มา-ปะ-ติ-ปะ-ทา). On this path, we follow the Noble Eightfold which consists of eight ways of **thinking/living**.

11. **In fact, they** are not limited to only those who seek to attain the ultimate peace, but they can be for anyone... for everyone. The Eightfold path does not teach us “what” to do or to believe; rather, it guides us “how” to handle things rightly in order not to fall into the extremes. It takes a holistic approach for they can **be applied in every aspect of lives.**

12. Due to this fact, the middle path and the Noble Eightfold are very suitable as a tool to cope with political, economic and social challenges. The “Right Speech” or สัมมาวาจา - of all eight guidelines - deserves special

attention considering the state of our society today.

13. We often hear that “your words create your world”, so if we want our world to be full of happiness and kindness, then we ought to speak to each other with positive words, nice words, yet still be frank. Making the society a better place is easier than some may think.

14. Imagine a place where people follow the “Right speech”, then there will surely be no gunshots and bombs; no hatred and wars there. Neighbors will be friends who can live together in compassion and kindness.

15. It is wise we walk this path when we want to build and sustain a harmonious society, or when we want to preserve and restore the ecological system.

16. With moderation and the Noble Eightfold, we will be able to deal with modern threats such as natural disasters, climate change, transnational crimes and terrorism more effectively, I am certain.

17. In closing, Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of the Royal Thai Government, and all Thai Buddhists, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you all who have traveled from around the world to

participate in the 8th International Conference. My special gratitude goes to the Sangha Supreme Council (มหาเถรสมาคม), Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya University (มหาจุฬาลงกรณ์ราชวิทยาลัย) and other relevant agencies from the public and private sectors who made the celebration of the Vesak Day 2011 a great success.

18. Your presence here is a blessing for us all.

สวัสดีครับ
