UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR

Ms. Una McCauley

MESSAGE ON THE DAY OF VESAK

On this day of Vesak, I extend special greetings to the celebrations in Sri Lanka, a country that was instrumental in leading the United Nations General Assembly to designate this observance.

Celebrating the International Vesak day in Sri Lanka is of great significance, as Sri Lanka is a land thrice blessed by the Lord Buddha’s visits. The values that Lord Buddha espoused, including human rights, democratic governance and respect for the dignity of life transcend religion and ethnicity. These precepts are placed at the center of this year’s theme, ‘Buddhist Teachings for Social Justice and Sustainable World Peace,’ emphasising their relevance throughout history and even more so, today.

As Sri Lanka observes International Vesak Day, let me wish the country and its people a future, where the values of Lord Buddha serve to promote reconciliation across all groups, sustainable development and long term peace.

For the UN, the values of Lord Buddha sit at the centre of the UN Charter, and are what the UN strives to promote in countries across the world as a means towards ensuring peace, security and development.

The past year has seen an unprecedented wave of violence and conflict globally. As we observe Vesak this year, let us reflect on the tenets of compassion and respect for all so beautifully taught by the Buddha, and shared across all religions and faiths. These tenets should guide governments and the international community in working for justice and truth, ensuring that no one, particularly the most vulnerable, is left behind.

As natural disasters, conflict, extremism and injustice continue to put more and more innocent lives at risk, there is a strong call for us to work in unity to support and strengthen human dignity and stand for those who have no voice.

The call for justice is as strong as it ever was, and we come together as one in the understanding that diversity is to be respected and valued, while building trust and upholding the human rights of all citizens to enjoy lasting peace.
We also have the duty as preached by the Lord Buddha, to respect and protect the environment. Let us not forget that life on land and life below water are inextricably linked, and that we have the tremendous responsibility to mitigate and be conscious of Climate Change. As we work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, let us always be mindful of our role as protectors of this planet.

This Vesak Day, let us all collectively unite for the common good and transcend those boundaries that may divide us, to work towards a just, peaceful and secure future for all.

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