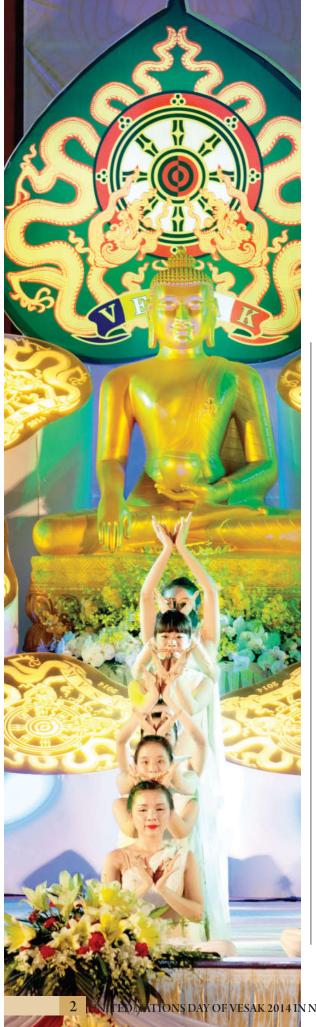


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ONS DAY OF VESAK 2014 IN NINH BINH



The book "The United Nations Day of Vesak 2014 at Ninh Binh" offers readers a comprehensive view of the largest international Buddhist event ever organized in Vietnam, while reflecting the increasing prominence of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) in the global Buddhist community. With over 10,000 attendees, including 1,500 international delegates from 95 countries and territories, the 2014 UN Vesak at Ninh Binh, Vietnam, became a solid bridge connecting Vietnamese Buddhism with the international community. This event underscored the essential role of Buddhism in addressing global issues initiated by the United Nations, such as sustainable development, peace, and social welfare.

Structure and Contents of the Book

The book is divided into four main sections, each highlighting crucial steps that reflect Buddhism's role in fostering a just, democratic, and civilized society.

Part I: Preparations for the 2014 UN Vesak focuses on the meticulous preparations of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, in collaboration with various governmental bodies and under the guidance of the Government. The challenges of organizing such a large international event were managed with creativity and efficiency, showcasing the VBS's professionalism in event coordination. Cooperation among ministries, departments, and local governments ensured the smooth execution of the event, from security arrangements to logistical planning and the reception of international delegates.

Part II: Main Activities of UN Vesak 2014

provides detailed accounts of the event, starting with the grand opening ceremony and leading into scientific forums discussing topics such as "Buddhism and Sustainable Development," "Buddhist Response to Climate Change," and "Buddhism and Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies." Each theme resonated with global concerns, aligning with the UN's Millennium Development Goals. Through these discussions, Buddhist scholars from around the world shared insights and proposed Buddhist-based solutions to the pressing issues facing humanity. The cultural and artistic activities held during Vesak added a rich dimension to the experience, offering international delegates profound insights into Vietnamese Buddhist culture and art.

Part III: Cultural and Artistic Activities emphasizes the pivotal role of culture and art in creating a spiritual bridge between Vietnamese Buddhism and the world. Buddhist exhibitions and traditional performances highlighted the cultural and spiritual beauty of Vietnamese Buddhism. This was a unique opportunity for Vietnam to present to the world the Buddhist artistic heritage that has accompanied the nation's development throughout history.

Part IV: Evaluation and Conclusion evaluates the success of UN Vesak 2014 not only as a religious event but also as a significant step in the international integration of the VBS. This section reviews the key accomplishments, from the organization's success to the core values Vietnamese Buddhism contributed to the global community. The Ninh Binh Declaration—the result of the 2014 UN Vesak conveyed a powerful message of peace, social justice, and sustainable development, affirming the global Buddhist community's commitment to building a better future for humanity.

Visionary Leadership and Contributions of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha

With strategic vision and wise leadership, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha exceeded expectations in both scale and impact at the 2014 UN Vesak. From meticulous oversight of organizational efforts to active engagement in global issues, the VBS has firmly established itself as a leading Buddhist organization within both the region and the world. The contributions of the VBS extend beyond the success of Vesak 2014, embracing the application of Buddhist principles to address pressing global challenges, including environmental protection, sustainable economic growth, and the maintenance of global peace.

The Importance of UN Vesak for Global Issues

UN Vesak is not only a celebration honoring the Buddha but also a platform for the global Buddhist community to reflect and take action on critical global issues championed by the United Nations. Topics like sustainable development, climate change, and social conflict were addressed seriously and scientifically at Vesak. As a spiritual and cultural bridge, Buddhism transcends moral teachings, offering practical solutions to foster peace and prosperity for the world.

Conclusion

This book is more than a record of the achievements of the 2014 UN Vesak. It stands as a testament to the astute leadership of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in promoting peace, sustainable

development, and international cooperation. From the early stages of preparation to its execution and final reflections, this book provides a detailed insight into how UN Vesak 2014 helped affirm the role of Vietnamese Buddhism on the global stage, serving as a source of inspiration for those interested in Buddhism and global issues.

Thich Nhat Tu

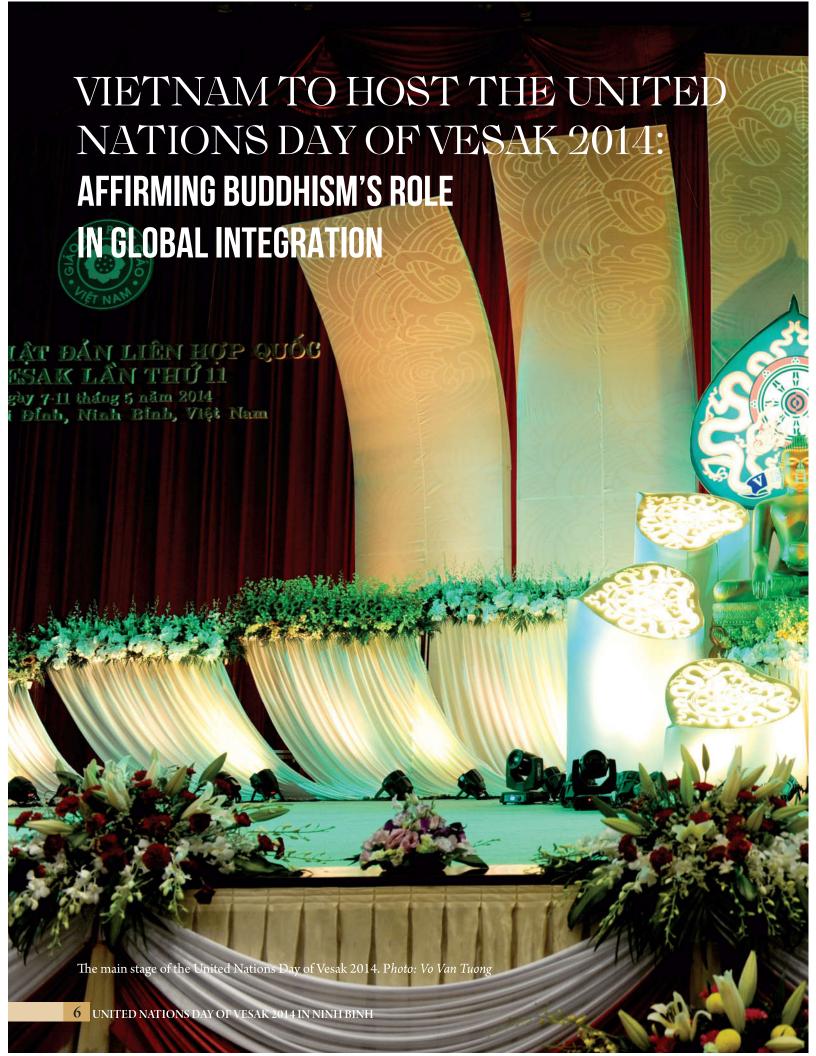
HCM City

Former Secretary-General of UN Vesak 2008 Standing Member of the Executive Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha Vice Chairman of the VBS in Ho Chi Minh City Permanent Vice-Rector, Vietnam Buddhist University,

Co-Editor-in-Chief, Vietnam Tripitaka Translation Project









With the approval of the Vietnamese government and the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV), the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) is honored to host the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014 at Bai Dinh Pagoda in Ninh Binh. Taking place from May 7 to 11, 2014, at the Trang An Buddhist Center, this marks the second time Vietnam has hosted the Vesak celebration, following the successful Vesak 2008 in Hanoi.

An International Festival Honoring Global **Buddhist Values**

Since being officially recognized by the United Nations in 1999, the Vesak Festival, which commemorates three significant events in the Buddha's life-his Birth, Enlightenment, and Passing (Nirvana)—has become a global cultural and religious event. Vesak 2014 provides an opportunity to introduce Vietnam's rich Buddhist traditions to an international audience, while further enhancing Vietnam's standing in the global Buddhist community.

Key Themes and Discussion Forums

The central theme of Vesak 2014, "Buddhism's Contribution to the Achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals," will guide five major scholarly forums:

- Buddhism's Response to Sustainable Development and Social Change.
- 2. Buddhism's Response to Global Warming and Environmental Protection.
- 3. The Contribution of Buddhism to Healthy Lifestyles.
 - 4. Peacebuilding and Post-Conflict Recovery.
 - 5. Buddhist Education and University Programs.

These topics are closely linked to Vietnam's cultural traditions and the principles of Buddhism, while also addressing pressing global issues such as sustainable development, environmental protection, and peacebuilding.

• A Significant Diplomatic Event for Vietnam

The 2014 Vesak celebration is not only a religious event but also an important diplomatic occasion for Vietnam. It represents an opportunity to elevate Vietnam's role and responsibility within the global community. Additionally, Vesak allows Vietnam to showcase its cultural and historical treasures to a global Buddhist audience, promoting the peaceful and welcoming image of the country.

Cultural and Spiritual Activities of Vesak 2014

In addition to the academic forums, Vesak 2014 will feature a range of vibrant cultural and spiritual activities, including exhibitions of Buddhist and Vietnamese culture, traditional art performances, cultural fairs, and food festivals. There will also be colorful processions of Buddhist floats and extensive decorations with Buddhist flags and lanterns. These activities aim to create a grand festival atmosphere, offering deeper insights into Vietnamese culture and the spiritual values of Buddhism.

Welcoming International Delegates and Vietnamese Buddhists

The Vesak 2014 celebration is expected to welcome approximately 10,000 participants, including 1,500 international delegates from 90-100 countries and territories, comprising Buddhist leaders, scholars, professors, and practitioners. Additionally, around 8,500 Vietnamese Buddhists and citizens will partake in the official events. This represents a valuable opportunity for Vietnam to assert its role within the global Buddhist community and promote Buddhism's message of peace and humanity.

Conclusion

The United Nations Day of Vesak 2014 is a major cultural and religious event of global significance, reaffirming Vietnam's role and status in international **Buddhist** community. It serves not only as a celebration of the profound spiritual teachings of the Buddha but also as a platform for Vietnam to promote its image, culture, and people on the global stage, contributing to the goals of peace, sustainable development, and global cooperation.



Professor Lancaster in the thematic session of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014. Photo: Vo Van Tuong



THE FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING OF UNITED NATIONS VESAK 2014:



The first preparatory meeting of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014

Since being officially granted the responsibility of hosting the 11th United Nations Vesak 2014, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) has actively organized and implemented numerous activities to ensure the success of this international event. This is the second time VBS has hosted the UN Vesak, affirming Vietnam's position and reputation within the global Buddhist community.

• Preparations for Vesak 2014: Comprehensive

Planning and Strong Determination

From the beginning, VBS has held continuous meetings with the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV) to discuss essential tasks and logistics. The first meeting between VBS and ICDV took place on November 24, 2013, in Hanoi, laying the groundwork for meticulous planning. Later, another meeting was held at Bai Dinh Center in Ninh Binh to check the progress. VBS and relevant agencies are focusing all

efforts on finalizing infrastructure, event programs, international relations, and cultural ceremonies.

Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu, Standing Vice Chairman of the VBS Executive Council and President of the Vesak 2014 Organizing Committee,



confidently stated: "Hosting Vesak at Bai Dinh not only showcases this large VBS facility but also affirms its readiness to host such an international event. We expect to welcome between 4,000 to 10,000 attendees, including 800 international delegates supported with travel and accommodation, as well as 700 self-funded delegates from nearly 90 countries and territories."

Close Cooperation with Government Agencies

During the preparation phase, VBS worked closely with government bodies such as the Government Committee for Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Public Security to ensure all critical aspects related to security, international relations, and event logistics are on track. A special task force, drawing on the successful experience of Vesak 2008, has been formed to support Vesak 2014, highlighting the commitment of all stakeholders involved.

Diverse Program and Large Scale

United Nations Vesak 2014 will take place from May 7 to 11 at Bai Dinh Pagoda, a site renowned not only for its stunning natural beauty but also its deep Buddhist cultural significance. Activities include an opening ceremony, a closing ceremony, academic seminars, cultural exhibitions, a Buddhist fair, and various cultural and artistic performances. By March 18, 2014, 120 research papers had already been submitted, focusing on the theme "Buddhism's Contribution to Achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals." Translation and preparation work is progressing rapidly, ensuring all aspects are ready for this significant event.

However, some challenges regarding infrastructure remain, such as the 4,000m² main hall, which is still in the final stages of completion, along with public facilities and roads needed for the event.

Pride in VBS's Achievements

Compared to Vesak 2008, this year's organization involves significant differences. VBS is directly responsible for hosting and has mobilized funding through a socialization approach. Despite having less preparation time, the determination of VBS, combined with close cooperation from government agencies, has instilled strong confidence in the success of Vesak 2014. This event not only affirms Vietnam's role in the global Buddhist community but also highlights VBS's maturity after 33 years of establishment (1981-2014).

Vesak 2014 – A New Milestone for Vietnamese **Buddhism**

The United Nations Vesak 2014 in Ninh Binh is expected to mark a significant milestone in the development of VBS. Not only is it an opportunity to honor Buddhist values, but it also serves as a bridge for Vietnam to promote its cultural and national identity to the international community. Vesak 2014 also reinforces VBS's position, contributing to the values of peace, sustainable development, and mutual understanding in the global Buddhist community.

In conclusion, with the meticulous preparation and strong determination of VBS, Vesak 2014 promises to be a highly successful event, leaving a lasting impression on the global map of Buddhism.



Press conference on the preparatory meeting of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014. Photo: Ngo Dung

THE 2014 UNITED NATIONS DAY OF VESAK:

A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL EVENT IN VIETNAM

United Nations Vesak Festival 2014: An international event in Vietnam

On November 24, 2013, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) officially announced during a press conference in Hanoi that it would host the 2014 United Nations Day of Vesak at Bai Dinh Pagoda in Ninh Binh. This marks the second time Vietnam has been honored to organize this significant event, reaffirming the role and responsibility of Vietnamese Buddhism on the international stage.

Theme and Significance of Vesak 2014

The central theme of Vesak 2014 is "Buddhism's Contribution to Achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals." Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu, Standing Vice Chairman of the Executive Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, emphasized that this theme underscores Buddhism's role in building a world of peace,



happiness, and equality, thereby elevating the values of humanity and peace for all.

• Scope and International Participation

Vesak 2014 is expected to welcome around 1,500 international delegates, including leaders of Buddhist organizations, professors, scholars, and lay Buddhists from 95 countries and territories. Additionally, over 10,000 Vietnamese Buddhists and citizens will participate. This presents an opportunity for Vietnamese Buddhism to showcase the nation's culture and people to international friends while promoting spiritual tourism and advocating for UNESCO to recognize the Trang An Landscape Complex as a World Heritage Site.

Key Academic Forums

During the celebration, five key academic forums will focus on urgent global and Buddhist issues:

1. Buddhist Response Sustainable Development and Social Change

- 2. Buddhist Response to Global Warming and **Environmental Protection**
- 3. Buddhist Contribution to Healthy Living
- 4. Buddhist Contributions to Peace-Building and Post-Conflict Recovery
- 5. Buddhist Education and University Level Programs.

Support from the Vietnamese Government

Mr. Bui Thanh Ha, Deputy Head of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs, confirmed that the Vietnamese Government will fully support the event to ensure its success. Security and logistical preparations are of utmost importance to safeguard international visitors and Buddhists alike. This event is also an opportunity for Vietnam to demonstrate its commitment to religious freedom and its responsibilities towards the international community.

Contributions from Vietnamese Buddhism

The budget for organizing Vesak 2014 has been sourced from social contributions, with sponsorship from Xuan Truong Enterprises and other organizations. This collective effort illustrates the unity of society in supporting an internationally significant event, further highlighting the role of Vietnamese Buddhism in both social and global

• Statement from Most Venerable Brahmapundit

Most Venerable Brahmapundit, Chairman of the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV), stated, "The 2014 United Nations Day of Vesak is a vital diplomatic event, helping to elevate the role of Vietnamese Buddhism in international integration while affirming Vietnam's position and responsibility to the United Nations. The celebration also aims to promote Vietnam's cultural and spiritual values, enhance tourism, and support the recognition of the Trang An Landscape Complex as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO." He further asserted, "This is an opportunity to apply Buddhist principles to address global challenges. We are committed to making this event a great success."

Conclusion: Vesak 2014 – An International **Buddhist Milestone in Vietnam**

Vesak 2014 is not only a major religious event but also a platform for Vietnam to reaffirm its role within the international community, demonstrating its proactive stance in integration and sustainable development. With meticulous preparation, Vesak 2014 promises to be a grand success, leaving a lasting impression of Vietnam's culture, people, and Buddhism in the hearts of international friends.



Photo: Ngo Dung

THE SECOND PRESS CONFERENCE ON VESAK 2014: POISED FOR A GLOBAL BUDDHIST EVENT

On the afternoon of April 28, 2014, at Quan Su Pagoda in Hanoi, the International Organizing Committee for Vesak 2014 held a press conference to announce the key details of the event and update the media on the ongoing preparations. The conference attracted over 100 reporters from major media outlets across the country.

Thorough Preparations for Vesak 2014

Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu, Permanent Vice Chairman of the Executive Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (GHPGVN) and Chairman

of the International Organizing Committee for Vesak 2014, shared progress on the preparations for the event, scheduled to take place at Bai Dinh Pagoda, Ninh Binh, from May 7 to 11, 2014. According to the Venerable, the Content, Protocol, Logistics, and Security subcommittees have nearly completed their tasks. The event is expected to welcome around 1,500 leaders from Buddhist communities worldwide, along with 10,000 Vietnamese Buddhists and citizens.

To ensure safety and order during the event, the organizing committee has developed detailed plans



to manage crowds and security. A main hall accommodating 3,500 participants has been prepared, alongside two large outdoor screens, with 40,000 meal servings provided daily for attendees. More than 2,000 volunteers are ready to assist in the event's various activities.

Meticulous Preparations **Contributions from the Organizers**

Most Venerable Thich Gia Quang, Head of the Central Information and Communication Committee of the GHPGVN, provided further details on logistical arrangements. The organizing committee has set up mobile restrooms and ensured sufficient infrastructure for the large number of participants. One highlight of the event is a 10-episode documentary titled "Vietnamese Buddhism: Walking with the Nation", produced by Truyen hinh An Vien (AVG), which has been airing since April 28, 2014, showcasing Vietnamese Buddhism and its deep connection with the nation's history and culture.

In addition to traditional Buddhist ceremonies, Vesak 2014 will feature five academic conferences and various cultural events, including Buddhist cultural exhibitions, cultural fairs, and a lantern festival praying for world

peace. The opening and closing ceremonies will be broadcast live on national television on May 8 and May 10.

A Unique Opportunity to Promote Vietnam's

Image and **Spiritual Tourism**

Venerable Thich Tu. Deputy Secretary-General of the Vesak 2014 Organizing Committee, emphasized that Vesak is not only a key Buddhist event but also an opportunity for Vietnam to assert its role on the global stage. Vesak 2014 provides an ideal platform to promote the country's image, culture, people, and while also fostering spiritual contributing tourism, Vietnam's overall

economic development. The Venerable also expressed hope that Vesak 2014 will support the recognition of Trang An Scenic Landscape Complex as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Vesak 2014, with the theme "Buddhism's Contribution to Achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals"—proposed by the host country, Vietnam-highlights the global Buddhist community's desire to build a peaceful, happy, and just world for all. This theme underscores that Buddhism, beyond being a religion, serves as a powerful inspiration for constructing a fair, civilized, and sustainable society.

Poised for the Opening Ceremony

With just 10 days left until the opening ceremony, preparations for Vesak 2014 are nearly complete. The subcommittees are making final checks and adjustments to ensure a smooth and impressive opening.

During the press conference, numerous questions from reporters about the organization of the event were thoroughly answered by the Buddhist leaders, helping the public and the media better understand the scope and significance of Vesak 2014.

Conclusion: Vesak 2014 – A Highly Anticipated **Global Buddhist Event**

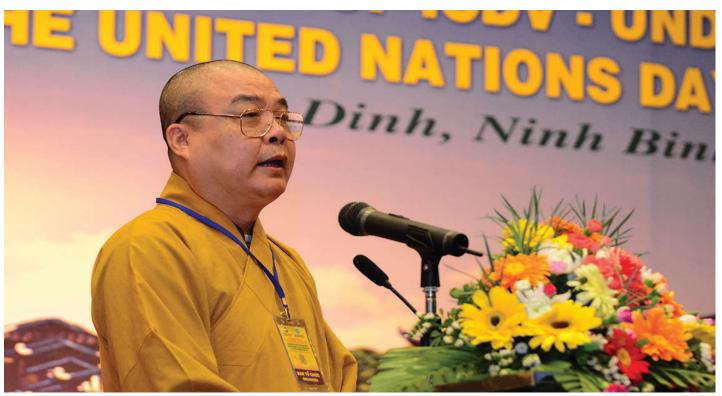
With meticulous preparation and the concerted efforts of the organizing subcommittees, Vesak 2014 promises to be a resounding success, leaving a lasting impression of Vietnam's people, culture, and Buddhism on the international community. Vesak 2014 will not only honor Buddhist values but also provide Vietnam with an opportunity to demonstrate its proactive role in international integration, contributing to global peace and sustainable development.



Photo: Nguyen Vuong

THE SECOND PREPARATORY MEETING OF THE UN VESAK 2014:

A GLOBAL BUDDHIST EVENT IN VIETNAM



Most Ven. Thich Thanh Nhieu delivering a speech at the second preparatory meeting of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014. Photo: Thich Ngo Dung

On March 20, 2014, at the International Conference Center, Bai Dinh Pagoda (Ninh Binh), the second meeting of the International Organizing Committee for the United Nations Vesak 2014 was held under the leadership of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS). This significant event laid the groundwork for preparing Vesak 2014, an important global Buddhist gathering hosted by Vietnam.

• Goals and Vision of the Conference

The meeting brought together prominent Buddhist leaders and government representatives, including Most Venerable Thich Tri Quang, Most Venerable Thich Thien Nhon, and Most Venerable Dr. Dharmarata (Vice Chairman of the UN Vesak International Organizing Committee), along with senior monks from the VBS Central Executive Council and central government officials.

In his opening remarks, Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu, Standing Vice Chairman of the VBS Executive Council, emphasized the importance of the conference, urging all delegates to focus their wisdom on discussing the organizational tasks to ensure the smooth running of the event. Mr. Pham Dung, Deputy Minister of Home Affairs and Chairman of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs, further emphasized: "Vesak 2014 is not only an opportunity for Buddhists worldwide to connect but also a chance to showcase Vietnamese culture and people, reaffirm the State's commitment to religious freedom, and promote Vietnam's image to the international community."

• Preparations for Vesak 2014: Consensus and **Close Coordination**

During the meeting, Most Venerable Thich



The second preparatory meeting of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014. Photo: Ngo Dung

Duc Thien, Deputy Secretary-General of the VBS Executive Council, presented detailed suggestions to the Vesak organizing plan. Delegates engaged in thorough discussions, achieving consensus and coordinating efforts to ensure the success of this international event. VBS's subcommittees continued their discussions later in the day to complete their assigned tasks.

In a spirit of responsibility and collaboration, the conference approved the overall plan, highlighting numerous positive aspects. Accordingly, UN Vesak 2014 in Vietnam will be themed "Buddhism's Contribution to Achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals." The conference urged the subcommittees to finalize the optimal plans to ensure the success of this event, leaving a lasting impression of Vietnam on the international community.

The Scope and Rich Activities of Vesak 2014

It is expected that Vesak 2014 will welcome 1,500 international delegates from 100 countries and territories, including embassies and international organizations in Vietnam, along with over 8,500 domestic participants and Buddhist followers. The funding for the event will primarily come

from social contributions, reflecting the strong community support for the occasion.

During the Vesak celebration, numerous activities will be organized, including a Buddhist cultural fair, cultural exhibitions, international artistic performances, fireworks displays, traditional Buddhist ceremonies like Buddha bathing, and Dharma talks on the significance of Buddha's birth. These events will not only honor Buddhist values but also serve as an opportunity for Vietnam to promote its culture and people to the world.

Vesak 2014: A Mark of Buddhism and a Global **Cultural Event**

Vesak 2014 is not only a religious event but also an important occasion for Vietnam to assert its role in the global Buddhist community. With meticulous preparation and strong consensus, the event promises to create a lasting and positive impact, spreading the Buddhist values of peace, compassion, and sustainable development. Vesak 2014 will also provide Vietnam with the opportunity to showcase its rich cultural heritage, history, and people to the international delegates, further solidifying the position of Vietnamese Buddhism on the world stage.

THIRD PREPARATORY MEETING ON VESAK 2014 PREPARATION: A COMMITMENT TO SUCCESS AND COMPREHENSIVE COORDINATION

On April 26, 2014, at the Hoa Lu Hotel Conference Hall, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) of Ninh Binh province held the second conference to prepare for the United Nations Vesak Day 2014. This significant event gathered Buddhist

leaders, government representatives, and local authorities to coordinate efforts and ensure the success of this global Buddhist celebration.

• Ensuring Organizational Excellence and Safety for Vesak 2014

The conference was attended by key figures such as Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu, Standing Vice Chairman of the VBS Executive Council and Chairman of the UN Vesak 2014 Organizing Committee, alongside other Buddhist leaders and subcommittee representatives responsible for various organizational tasks. Government officials, including Mr. Nguyen Manh Hung, Deputy Head of the Central Commission for Mass Mobilization, and Mr. Duong Dai Dai, Deputy Director of the Department of Home Affairs of Ninh Binh, were also present to provide support.

During the conference, Most Venerable Thich Tho Lac presented the plan for the Buddhist cultural activities led by Ninh Binh. He emphasized that Vesak 2014 offers an important opportunity to introduce the international community to Vietnam's rich Buddhist heritage and traditional culture through art exhibitions, cultural fairs, and various artistic showcases.

Reception and Coordination of Delegates
 According to the Vesak 2014 Organizing



Committee Secretariat, approximately international delegates from 100 countries and territories, as well as 1,200 domestic representatives, are expected to attend. Hotels in Ninh Binh have been prepared to accommodate international delegations and domestic participants. For delegates staying in Hanoi and nearby provinces, detailed transportation plans have been put in place. The reception of heads of state and international delegations will be closely coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Government Committee for Religious Affairs.

Volunteer Coordination and Logistical Support

Venerable Thich Quang Thanh, Head of the Volunteer Coordination Subcommittee, reported that 3,922 volunteers have been enlisted to serve Vesak 2014, including 473 volunteers responsible for diplomatic reception and 1,600 handling logistics. These volunteers will play critical roles in tasks such as lighting the ceremonial lanterns, guiding international guests, and providing support at airports and hotels. Volunteer training programs are being finalized to ensure that all volunteers are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge.

In terms of logistics, Most Venerable Thich Thanh Phong shared that the Logistics Committee is diligently preparing meals for the tens of thousands of attendees. Each day, an estimated 40,000 meals will be served free of charge to Buddhist participants, with 1,000 volunteers assisting in food service. The meals will meet high standards of food safety and quality.



Most Ven. Thich Tho Lac delivering a speech at the conference

Cultural and Festival Highlights

A wide range of Buddhist cultural activities will be held during Vesak 2014, including cultural exhibitions, a Buddhist cultural fair, and a lantern festival praying for world peace. One of the standout events will be the grand flower-car parade celebrating Vesak, which is expected to draw significant attention from delegates and the public. Additionally, the prayer ceremony for "World Peace – People's Tranquility" will be a key highlight of the event.

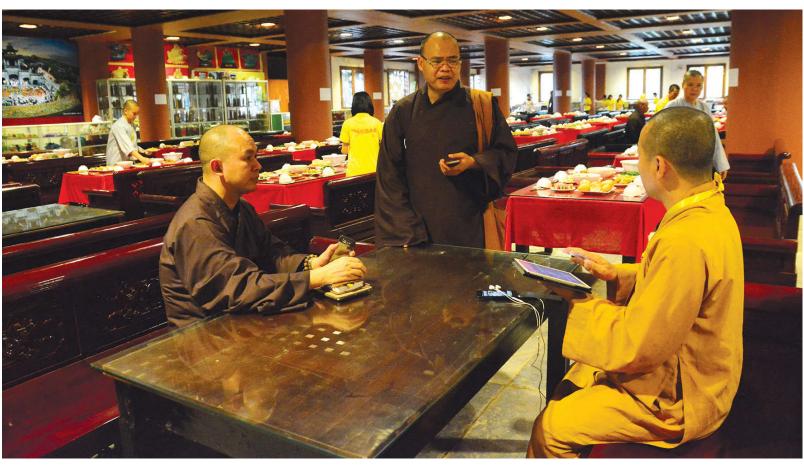
• Conclusion: Comprehensive Preparation for a Successful Vesak

The second conference underscored the spirit of unity and commitment among the subcommittees and relevant government bodies in preparing for UN Vesak 2014. Both Buddhist leaders and government officials have reached consensus on the





INSPECTION OF FOOD SAFETY MEASURES PRIOR TO THE OPENING OF THE UNITED NATIONS DAY OF VESAK 2014



From left to right: Most Ven. Thich Duc Thien, Most Ven. Thich Thanh Phong, and Most Ven. Thich Nhat Tu discussing food safety for the delegates of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014. Photo: Ngo Dung

In order to ensure food safety for the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014, which took place from May 7-11, 2014, at Bai Dinh Pagoda, Ninh Binh Province, the Food Safety Department deployed two working delegations on May 5 and 6 in coordination with the Hanoi and Ninh Binh Food Safety and Hygiene Sub-departments to conduct comprehensive inspections and reviews.

In Ninh Binh Province, the working delegation, in collaboration with the Food Safety and Hygiene Sub-department, conducted inspections at food

processing and supply locations catering to delegates and Buddhists, such as Hoa Lu Hotel and food processing facilities at Bai Dinh Pagoda. The inspection covered the review of food safety assurance plans, hygiene guidance for processing areas, food storage conditions, ingredient selection, clean water sources, and food transportation procedures. By May 6, all individuals and units involved had been assigned specific tasks and were ready to proceed according to the plan. The delegation also conducted on-site testing of

27 samples of bowls, plates, and food, ensuring compliance with food safety standards.

In Hanoi, the delegation coordinated with the municipal Food Safety and Hygiene Sub-department to inspect hotels such as Daewoo, Kim Lien, Muong Thanh, and the National Convention Center My Dinh, where banquets for delegates were held. The inspection focused on maintaining food safety standards, from ingredient selection and the three-step food verification process to food processing, storage, and sample retention as per regulations.

Following the inspections, the delegation received unanimous agreement and commitment

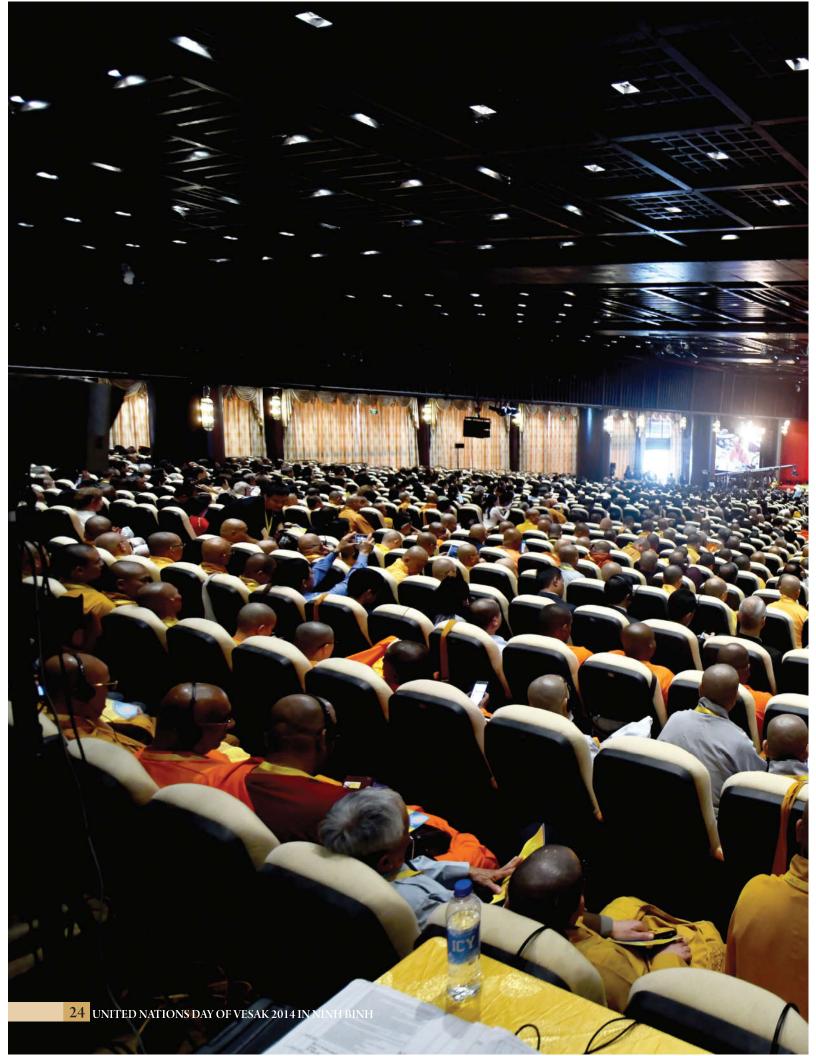
from hotel management and local authorities to implement synchronized food safety measures throughout the duration of the event. These measures included strict supervision of environmental hygiene, food processing and storage, as well as the retention of food samples to ensure the safety of all delegates and Buddhists attending the celebration.

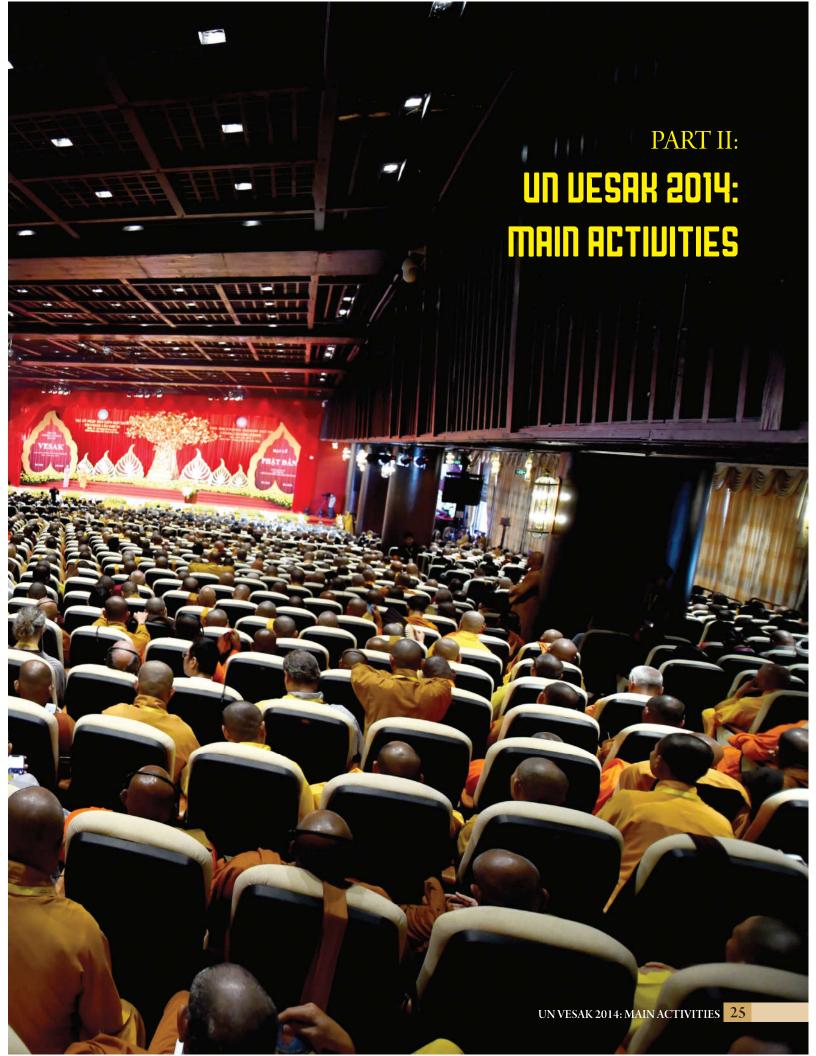
In the coming days, the Food Safety Department will continue to coordinate with local authorities, hotels, the standing task force, and relevant units to ensure absolute food safety throughout Vesak 2014, contributing to the success of this significant event.

Buddhist volunteers from the logistics committee preparing one hundred vegetarian dishes for the Grand Celebration. *Photo: Ngo Dung*









PROGRAM OF THE 2014 UN VESAK FESTIVAL IN NINH BINH, VIETNAM

Theme: "BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE UN MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS"

Bai Dinh Temple Convention Center, Ninh Binh Province, Vietnam May 7th – 11th, 2014

Tuesday, 06 May 2014		
All Day	Arrival of ICDV/IABU EXCO.	
11:00 AM	Lunch at the Hotel in Hanoi.	
19:00 PM	Dinner at the Hotel in Hanoi.	
Wednesday, (07 May 2014	
All Day	Arrival of participants at Airport Reception, Registration at the Hotel Lobby. Upon arrival, all participants will be transferred from the Airport to the Hotels in Ninh Binh.	
	ICDV EXCO/International Organizing Committee Meeting in Hanoi.	
09:00 AM	 Venue – Bai Dinh Temple: 08:00 AM - Vietnamese Workshop. 09:00 AM - ECAI workshop on "The Atlas of Maritime Buddhism" presiding by Prof. Dr. Lewis Lancaster, University of California, Berkeley, University of Hong Kong, University of the West. 	
13:30 PM	2nd Session - ICDV EXCO/International Organizing Committee Meeting in Hanoi.	
17:00 PM	Transportation from Hotel to National Convention Center for Gala Dinner (For EXCO & VIPs only).	
18:00 PM	Gala Dinner hosted by Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam at National Convention Center (For EXCO & VIPs only).	
20:30 PM	Dinner adjourned.	
21:00 PM	EXCO and foreign VIPS leave for Ninh Binh Province.	
22:30 PM	Arrive Ninh Binh and check-in the Hotel.	
Thursday, 08	May 2014 – Ninh Binh: Opening Ceremony	
06:00 AM	Breakfast.	
07:00 AM	Transportation of participants from Hotels to Bai Dinh Temple Convention Center, Ninh Binh Province.	
07:30 AM	Arrival at the Bai Dinh Temple Convention Center and sitting in the Conference hall.	

07:45 AM	Entry into the Bai Dinh Temple Convention Center by Buddhist leaders, Head of States, Foreign Dignitaries and Ambassadors.
08:00 AM	Homage to Triple Gem.
08:10 AM	Welcoming Speech by Most Ven. Thich Thanh Nhieu , the Chairman of ICDV-UNDV2014 International Organizing Committee and Standing Vice President of National Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.
08:20 AM	Speech by Most Ven.Prof. Brahmapundit , Founder/President of ICDV, Rector of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and Chairman of IABU.
08:30 AM	Message by HH. Thich Pho Tue, Supreme Patriarch of National Vietnam Buddhist Sangha to be read by Most Ven.Prof. Thich Chon Thien, Standing Vice President of National Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.
08:40 AM	Message by HH. Thich Tri Tinh , President of National Vietnam Buddhist Sangha to be read by Most Ven.Dr. Thich Tri Quang , Honorary Chairman of International Council for Day of Vesak 2014, Vice President of National Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.
08:50 AM	Opening address by H.E. Nguyen Sinh Hung , Chairman of the National Assembly of Vietnam.
09: 00 AM	Message from H.E. Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary-General.
09:10 AM	Message by H.E. Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, the Executive Secretary of the UNESCAP.
09:20 AM	Message from H.E. Irina Bokova, Director-General, UNESCO.
09:30 AM	(i) Message by Supreme Patriarch of Sri Lanka.(ii) Message by Buddhist Association of China.
09:50 AM	Keynote Speech on <i>Buddhist Perspective towards Achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals</i> by HH. Thich Duc Nghiep , Deputy Supreme Patriarch of National Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.
10:40 AM	Message by His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni of Cambodia.
10:50 AM	Special Speech by HE. Disanayaka Mudiyanselage Jayaratne , Prime Minister of Sri Lanka.
11:30 AM	Luncheon.
13:00 PM	Entry into the Bai Dinh Temple Convention Center.
13.30 PM	Special Speech by HE. Pham Dung , Deputy Minister of Home Affairs.
14:00 PM	 (i) Message by Supreme Patriarch of Thai Sangha. (ii) Message by Buddhist Federation of Japan. (iii) Message by Supreme Patriarch of Cambodia. (iv) Message by President of National Font of Laos Buddhism. (v) Message by Lama Lobzang, Secretary General of International Buddhist Confederation, India.
14:40 PM	Messages from Buddhist Leaders from different traditions, Head of States and Ambassadors.
15.45 PM	Group Photograph.
16:15 PM	Invited Guest Speaker on any sub-theme of UNDV 2014.
17:00 PM	Dinner.

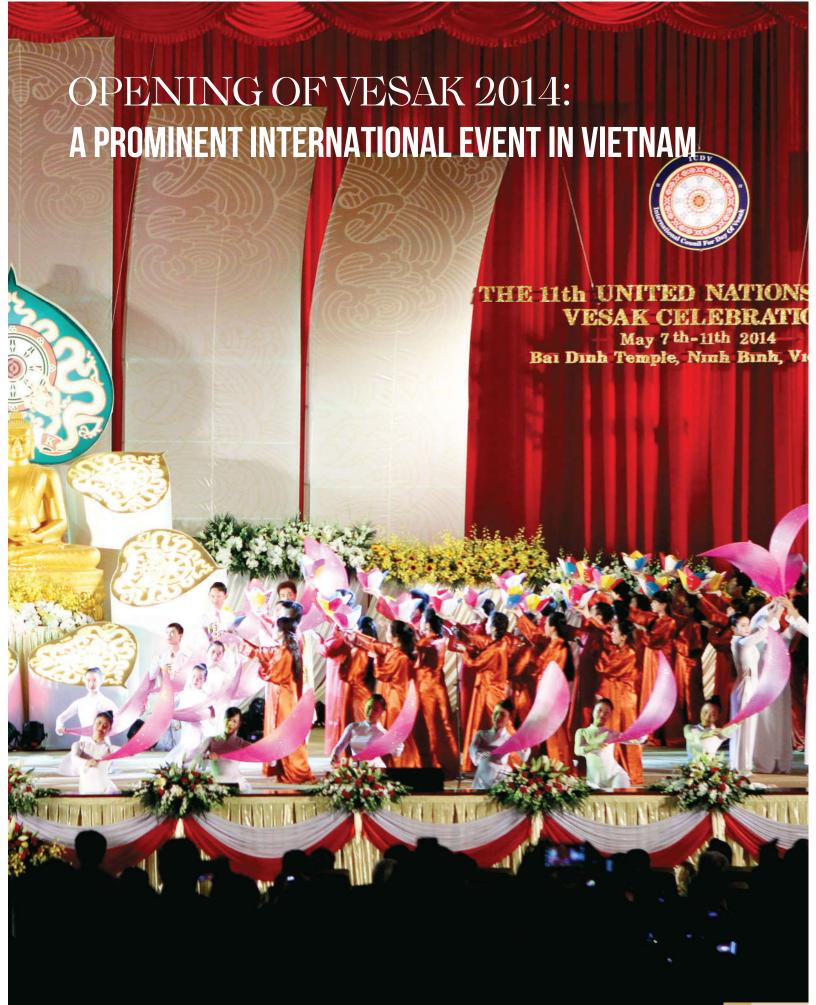
19:00 PM	International Cultural Performance.
20:45 PM	Back to hotel.
Friday, 09 M	ay 2014 - Ninh Binh: Thematic Workshops
06:00 AM	Breakfast.
07:00 AM	Transportation of participants from hotel to Bai Dinh Temple Convention Center, Ninh Binh Province.
07:30 AM	Arrival at the Bai Dinh Temple Convention Center and sitting in the Conference hall.
08:00 AM	Holy Chanting by Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana Traditions at specific Workshop venues.
08:30 AM	Thematic Workshops
	 Buddhist Response to Sustainable Development and Social Change. Buddhist Response to Global Warming and Environmental Protection. Buddhist Contributions to Healthy Living. Peace-building and Post-Conflict Recovery. Buddhist Education and University Level Curriculum.
11:30 AM	Luncheon.
13:00 PM	Workshops Continuation.
16:30 PM	The Charity Committee of the Central Vietnam Buddhist Sangha distributes charitable gifts.
17:00 PM	Dinner.
19:00 PM	International Chanting and Prayer for World Peace.
20:00 PM	Rapporteurs submit Workshop Reports to ICDV Secretariat and the Drafting Committee for writing the Vietnam Declaration.
21:00 PM	Back to Hotel.
Saturday, 10	May 2014 - Ninh Binh
06:00 AM	Breakfast.
07:00 AM	Sight-seeing Tour: All participants visit Trang An ecological and historical sites.
11:00 AM	Back to Bai Dinh Temple.
11:30 AM	Luncheon.
	CLOSING CEREMONY
13:00 PM	Entry into the Bai Dinh Temple Convention Center.
13:15 PM	Workshop Reports and Plenary Session.
14:50 PM	Arrival of H.E. Nguyen Xuan Phuc , Deputy Prime Ministers of Vietnam, Supreme Patriarch, Buddhist leaders and VIPs.
15:00 PM	Address by Most Ven. Thich Thanh Nhieu , the Chairman of ICDV-UNDV2014 International Organizing Committee and Standing Vice President of National Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.

15:10 PM	Address by Most Ven.Prof. Brahmapundit , Founder/President of ICDV, Rector of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and Chairman of IABU.
15:20 PM	Address by H.E. Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Deputy Prime Ministers of Vietnam.
15:40 PM	Secretariat Report on UNDV 2014.
16:00 PM	Announcement and Issuance of Vietnam Declaration 2014.
16:15PM	Cultural Performance for Success of UNDV 2014.
17:30 PM	Dinner.
19:00 PM	Candle-lit procession and chanting for World peace.
21:00 PM	Back to Hotel.
Sunday, 11 May 2014: Departure	
06:00 AM	Breakfast.
07:00 AM	(All Day): Check-out from hotel. Either send-off to airport or proceeding onto package tours.
08:00 AM	ICDV EXCO Meeting.





Buddhist artistic performance before the Opening Ceremony of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014. Photo: Thich Ngo Dung





Chairman of the National Assembly Nguyen Sinh Hung and global Buddhist leaders attending the Opening Ceremony of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014. Photo: Vietnam News Agency (TTXVN)

On the morning of May 8, 2014 (the 10th day of the fourth lunar month), the UN Vesak Vietnam 2014 officially commenced at the Bai Dinh International Conference Center, Ninh Binh. With the theme "Buddhism's Contribution to Achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals," this is the second time Vietnam has proudly hosted such a significant global event, further affirming its vital role within the international Buddhist community.

An International Event with High-Level Leadership Attendance

The Vesak 2014 celebration witnessed the participation of Vietnam's senior leaders, including National Assembly Chairman Nguyen Sinh Hung, former General Secretary Le Kha Phieu, former National Assembly Chairman Nguyen Van An, and Chairman of the Vietnam Fatherland Front Central Committee Nguyen Thien Nhan, along with numerous former Party and State leaders such as former General Secretaries Do Muoi and Nong Duc Manh, and former President Le Duc Anh.

Internationally, Sri Lankan Prime Minister D.M. Jayaratne, Cambodia's King Norodom Sihamoni, and diplomatic representatives from several countries graced the event, enhancing the ceremonial and global nature of the occasion. Over 1,150 delegates from 95 countries and territories, along with more than 10,000

Vietnamese monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists, gathered to create a grand and solemn atmosphere.

National Assembly Chairman Nguyen Sinh Hung's Speech: Affirming Vietnam's Global Role

In his opening remarks, National Assembly Chairman Nguyen Sinh Hung emphasized that Vesak not only honors the profound teachings of Buddha on peace, harmony, and compassion but also demonstrates Vietnam's strong commitment to global peace, cooperation, and sustainable development. He affirmed that this event represents the UN's determination to build a peaceful and united world. The success of Vesak in 2008 and again in 2014 clearly underscores Vietnam's status on the international stage.

Messages from Buddhist and International Leaders

Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu, Standing Vice President of the Executive Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and Chairman of the Vesak 2014 Organizing Committee, highlighted in his keynote address: "The world is facing numerous crises and challenges, from natural disasters to conflicts. In this context, Buddhism's values of compassion, peace, and harmony can significantly contribute to building a more sustainable and humane society."

Additionally, Venerable Brahmapundit, Chairman of the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV), expressed his joy with the meticulous organization by the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and extended deep gratitude to the Vietnamese State leadership for facilitating the successful realization of the event. Venerable Thich Pho Tue, Supreme Patriarch of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, also sent a message to the event, underscoring the importance of Vesak in promoting peace and harmony worldwide.

Sri Lankan Prime Minister D.M. Jayaratne, in his speech, emphasized that the teachings and values of Buddha continue relevance hold today,

fostering a peaceful and harmonious society for humanity.

Traditional Ceremonies and Highlight Activities

Immediately following the opening ceremony, the traditional Buddha bathing ritual took place at the Thich Ca Hall, symbolizing reverence for Buddha and a prayer for world peace. The release of doves and balloons, symbolizing a prayer for global harmony,



Chairman of the National Assembly Nguyen Sinh Hung delivering a speech at the Opening Ceremony of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014 on the morning of May 8. Photo: Thich Ngo Dung

also served as a poignant highlight, conveying a message of peace and unity.

To celebrate this occasion, a grand parade of floats adorned with Buddhist cultural symbols took place from Ninh Binh City to Bai Dinh Pagoda, drawing widespread participation from monks, nuns, and Buddhists. The beautifully and solemnly decorated floats created an impressive spectacle, showcasing the

reverence for Buddhist culture.

Conclusion and the Significance of Vesak 2014: Elevating Vietnam's **International Standing**

Vesak 2014 provided a unique opportunity for Vietnamese and international Buddhists to exchange and learn from one another, while also offering Vietnam a platform to promote its image as a peaceful, friendly, and globally integrated nation. Hosting the Vesak celebration for the second time in Vietnam left a deep impression on international participants, affirming the country's role within the global Buddhist community and enhancing its international stature.

Vesak 2014 is not only a religious event but also a bridge between cultures and nations, contributing to the collective effort to build a peaceful and sustainable world for all.



Sri Lankan Prime Minister D.M. Jayaratne delivering a speech at the Opening Ceremony of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014. Photo: Ngo Dung



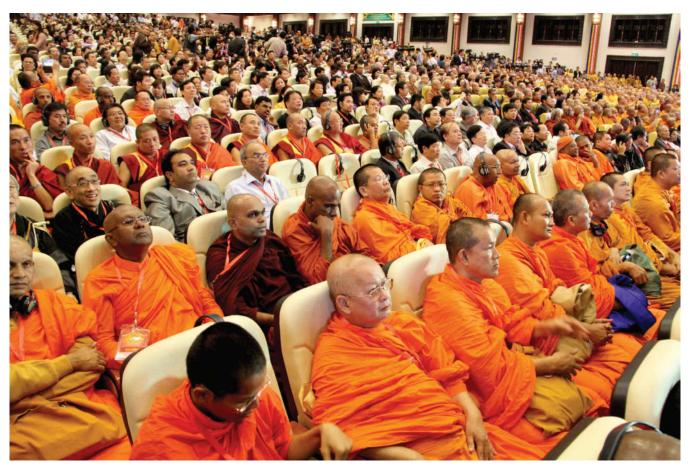
Leaders of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and international Buddhist communities at the Opening Ceremony of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014. *Photo: Ngo Dung*







Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc. Photo: Ngo Dung





OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 2014 UNITED NATIONS VESAK VIETNAN AT BAI DINH

As dawn broke on May 8, 2014, the Giac Ngo team set off from Ninh Binh City, just 16 kilometers from Bai Dinh, fully prepared to cover the muchanticipated opening ceremony of the 2014 United Nations Day of Vesak. The ceremony was set to begin at 9:00 a.m. at the Bai Dinh International Convention Center.

A total of 3,500 delegates filled the main hall, with thousands more watching the event on screens set up in the Bai Dinh hotel and in front of the Tam The Hall. The theme for this year's Vesak celebration, proposed by Vietnam, was "Buddhism's Contribution to Achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals," affirming the profound role of Buddhism in addressing global challenges.

Despite the early morning chill, light mist, and intermittent rain that had begun the night before, a large number of local residents and Buddhist groups made their way towards Bai Dinh Pagoda, located in the Trang An - Hoa Lu area, to attend the opening ceremony.

By 7:00 a.m., dragon dancers and volunteers solemnly welcomed guests at the Quan Am Yard. International dignitaries staying in Hanoi hotels were en route to Ninh Binh. The organizing committee had scheduled the arrival of top state officials for 8:15 a.m., followed by the entrance of high-ranking Buddhist clergy, state leaders, heads of state, diplomats, and ambassadors at 8:30 a.m., who would proceed to the main hall.

Vietnam Television (VTV) and An Vien Television were on-site early, setting up to broadcast the entire opening ceremony live. The ceremony was divided into two segments: the formal session at the convention hall and the traditional Buddhist Bathing Ceremony, held at the Thich Ca Hall within the pagoda complex.

At 6:30 a.m., Giac Ngo reporters conducted a brief interview with Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu, Standing Vice Chairman of the Executive Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and Chairman of the Vesak 2014 Organizing Committee. The Most Venerable shared that everyone was in high spirits, eagerly awaiting the opening of the second Vesak celebration hosted by Vietnam (the first being in 2008).

Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu also acknowledged the challenges of organizing the event at Bai Dinh compared to My Dinh, which had more facilities. Knowing this, the organizing committee worked tirelessly to construct a convention hall that could accommodate 3,500 people. Against all odds, the project was completed beyond expectations.

Several senior Buddhist leaders expressed their



joy and admiration for the successful completion of infrastructure to support Vesak 2014, a testament to the collective effort of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV), and the government at both national and local levels.

The Most Venerable further stressed the importance of the delegates embodying Buddhist values of compassion and wisdom. He hoped they would carry these messages back to their communities, working towards peace and environmental protection, thus living out the core Buddhist principles in everyday life. He called on everyone to maintain a spirit of harmony and compassion throughout the Vesak celebration to ensure its success.

By 8:55 a.m., high-ranking state officials, senior Buddhist clergy, heads of state, diplomats, and Buddhist leaders from across the globe had arrived at the main hall, where delegates had already taken their seats in anticipation of the opening ceremony.

At 9:15 a.m., the entire assembly recited the Buddha's name three times. Two minutes later, the hall entered a moment of reflection to honor the late Most Venerable Thich Tri Tinh, the First Vice Patriarch of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.

The sight of Most Venerable Thich Duc Nghiep, Vice Patriarch of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, accompanied by high-ranking Buddhist leaders, state officials, heads of state, and international dignitaries as they entered and took their seats, filled the hall with reverence.

At 9:25 a.m., the hall was adorned with floral tributes sent by party and state leaders, including former State President Le Duc Anh and Politburo member Le Hong Anh, as well as past General Secretaries Do Muoi and Nong Duc Manh.

Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu then delivered the opening speech, officially declaring the commencement of Vesak 2014.

Following his speech, Most Venerable Brahmapundit, Chairman of the International Council for the Day of Vesak, addressed the gathering. He recounted the history of Vesak and expressed his appreciation for the efforts of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in organizing such a meticulous and well-prepared celebration.

At 9:51 a.m., Most Venerable Thich Duc Nghiep read the message from the Supreme Patriarch of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha. Shortly after, Most Venerable Thich Chon Thien delivered the Buddhist Vesak message on behalf of the Executive Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.

Mr. Nguyen Sinh Hung, Chairman of the National Assembly of Vietnam, delivered a keynote speech, warmly welcoming all dignitaries. He reaffirmed the timeless values of Buddhism and the important role of such international gatherings in promoting dialogue, learning, and the integration of Buddhist teachings into modern life.

At 10:18 a.m., the message from the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was read, followed by the message from UNESCO.

After all the messages were delivered, the first part of the opening ceremony concluded. The second part took place at the Thich Ca Hall, where the traditional Buddha Bathing Ceremony, a spiritual ritual to commemorate the Buddha's birth, was held. The ceremony concluded with the release of doves and balloons, symbolizing prayers for peace.

The opening ceremony of Vesak 2014 marked the beginning of a series of special programs, forums, and cultural events, all centered around the theme of the celebration.



Speech by the UNESCO representative at the Opening Ceremony of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014. Photo: Thich Ngo Dung







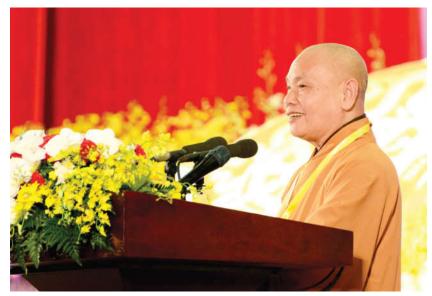
Chairman of the National Assembly Nguyen Sinh Hung, Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Thien Nhan before the opening of the UN Vesak 2014. *Photo: Nguyen Vuong*



Supreme Patriarch of Laos. Photo: Ngo Dung



Most Ven. Prof. Brahmapundit. Photo: Ngo Dung



His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon. Photo: Ngo Dung



The Opening Ceremony of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014. Photo: Ngo Dung

BREAKOUT SESSIONS AT THE 2014 UNITED NATIONS VESAK:



Buddhism and the Millennium Development Goals

As part of the 2014 United Nations Day of Vesak, breakout sessions featuring esteemed scholars, researchers, and Buddhist leaders from around the world took place at Bai Dinh Pagoda, Ninh Binh. Five major sessions, conducted in English, centered around the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), addressing urgent global issues such as environmental protection, sustainable development, and post-conflict peacebuilding.

• Key discussion topics included:

- 1. Buddhist Response to Climate Change and Environmental Protection
- 2. Building Peace and Post-Conflict Recovery

- 3. Buddhist Contribution to Healthy Living
- 4. Buddhism for Sustainable Development and Social Change
- 5. Buddhist Education and University-Level Curricula

• Active Participation from Scholars and Buddhist Leaders

The sessions attracted 108 papers from scholars and Buddhist dignitaries both domestically and internationally. Topics covered included mindfulness practices, post-war reconciliation, Buddhism and environmental protection, the application of meditation in modern life, and the role of women and families in peacebuilding. The speakers emphasized that Buddhist teachings not



only offer spiritual solutions but also practical applications for tackling global issues.

• Leadership of Esteemed Buddhist Figures

To ensure the success of the sessions, the Organizing Committee invited distinguished figures in Buddhism and education, including Professor Dr. Lê Mạnh Thát, Vice President of the Association of Buddhist Universities and an advisor for Vesak 2014, Ven. Dr. Dhammaratana, Vice President of the International Organizing Committee (IOC) for Vesak, and Ven. Dr. Thich Nhat Tu, Deputy Secretary-General of the Organizing Committee. Their professional leadership steered the discussions towards high-level academic dialogue while remaining relevant to contemporary issues.

Significant Progress in Education and Peace

Throughout the discussions, delegates had the opportunity to explore Buddhist education methods at the university level and how these could bring tangible benefits to communities and society. Additionally, several speakers demonstrated how meditation and mindfulness practices, when integrated into daily life, can enhance both mental and physical well-being, helping individuals find peace amidst societal challenges.

Buddhism and the Sustainable Future of

The breakout sessions also focused heavily on Buddhism's role in environmental protection sustainable development. Discussions explored ethical attitudes towards nature, reducing animal consumption, and applying the Buddhist philosophy of compassion and non-violence to build a greener and healthier future for humanity.

Congratulatory Attendance from Buddhist **Church Leaders**

The opening of the sessions was graced by prominent leaders of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, including His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon, His Eminence Thich Tri Quang, Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu, and other distinguished dignitaries. Their presence and congratulations affirmed that the insights gained from these discussions would provide a strong foundation for Buddhism's continued role in contributing to global sustainable development.

Conclusion: Buddhism – A Global Solution for a Brighter Future

The breakout sessions at the 2014 United Nations Day of Vesak provided immense value not only in terms of academic discourse but also in spiritual enrichment. The enthusiastic participation of delegates and the critical issues addressed throughout reaffirmed Buddhism's pivotal role in building a peaceful, stable, and sustainable society. Through its profound humanistic values and timeless wisdom, Buddhism continues to be a key driver in global reconciliation and sustainable development, guiding humanity towards a brighter and more harmonious future.





View of the Symposium at UN Vesak 2014. Photo: Ngo Dung











A Key Highlight of Vesak 2014

On the afternoon of May 8, 2014, the second session of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014 took place at the Bai Dinh Conference Center. This event drew hundreds of delegates from Buddhist traditions across the world, creating a lively and meaningful atmosphere of discussion. The session offered a platform for participants to exchange perspectives on the role of Buddhism in achieving global development goals.

• Participation of Buddhist and Government Leaders

The session was graced by the presence of high-ranking leaders from the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, including Most Venerable Thich Duc Nghiep, Most Venerable Thich Thien Nhon, and Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu. Additionally, prominent international Buddhist figures, as well as senior government representatives such as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka and Mr. Pham Dung, Deputy Minister of the Interior and Head of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs, were in attendance.

The session began with a presentation by Most Venerable Thich Duc Nghiep, who spoke on the theme "Buddhism's Contribution to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals." His speech underscored the vital role of Buddhism in fostering a peaceful, just, and sustainable world, reflecting the central message of Vesak 2014.

Profound Messages from International Delegates

Following Most Venerable Thich Duc Nghiep's address, Mr. Pham Dung delivered a welcoming speech, expressing pride in the harmony of various Buddhist traditions uniting for this Vesak celebration. He conveyed confidence in Buddhism's capacity to address global challenges. Thich Dhammaratana, Vice President of the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV), and Professor Dr. Le Manh That, an advisor to the Vesak 2014 Organizing Committee, chaired the discussion. Representatives from numerous international Buddhist organizations delivered messages of solidarity and scholarly contributions.

Delegates from Drukpa, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Australia, and other nations shared valuable insights.





His Holiness Thich Tri Quang delivering a speech at the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014 conference. Photo: Vo Van Tuong

They emphasized the importance of collaboration and mutual learning, driven by Buddhism's humanistic

and intellectual values, advance the United Nations' sustainable development goals.

Continuing the Vesak Spirit: Messages from Asian and Western Buddhism

After a brief intermission. the session resumed under the chairmanship of Venerable Bhante Chao Chu and Professor Lewis Lancaster. Delegates from the United States, Europe, Hungary, Sweden, South Korea, Japan, Myanmar, and Nepal shared their Buddhist activities and extended heartfelt gratitude to the Vietnamese government and the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha for facilitating this gathering. They reflected on the shared commitment to Buddhism's future, confident that the religion would continue to play a key role in addressing pressing global issues such as climate change, poverty,

and violence.

The Sacred Bodhi Tree Planting Ceremony: A Symbol of Peace and Growth

The afternoon session concluded with a solemn Bodhi tree planting ceremony in front of the Tam The Hall. This sacred ritual. symbolizing peace and Buddhist wisdom, represented sustainable growth and harmony between humanity and nature, as well as between nations and religions.

The 2014 United Nations Day of Vesak stands as not only a confluence of Buddhist thought but also a forum where global Buddhist leaders and scholars

unite to contribute to the creation of a peaceful, sustainable, and compassionate world.



His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon delivering a speech at the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014 conference. Photo: Vo Van Tuong



The scene of the UN Vesak 2014 seminar. Photo: Ngo Dung



Most Ven. Thich Nhat Tu delivering a speech at the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014 conference.

Photo: Vo Van Tuong





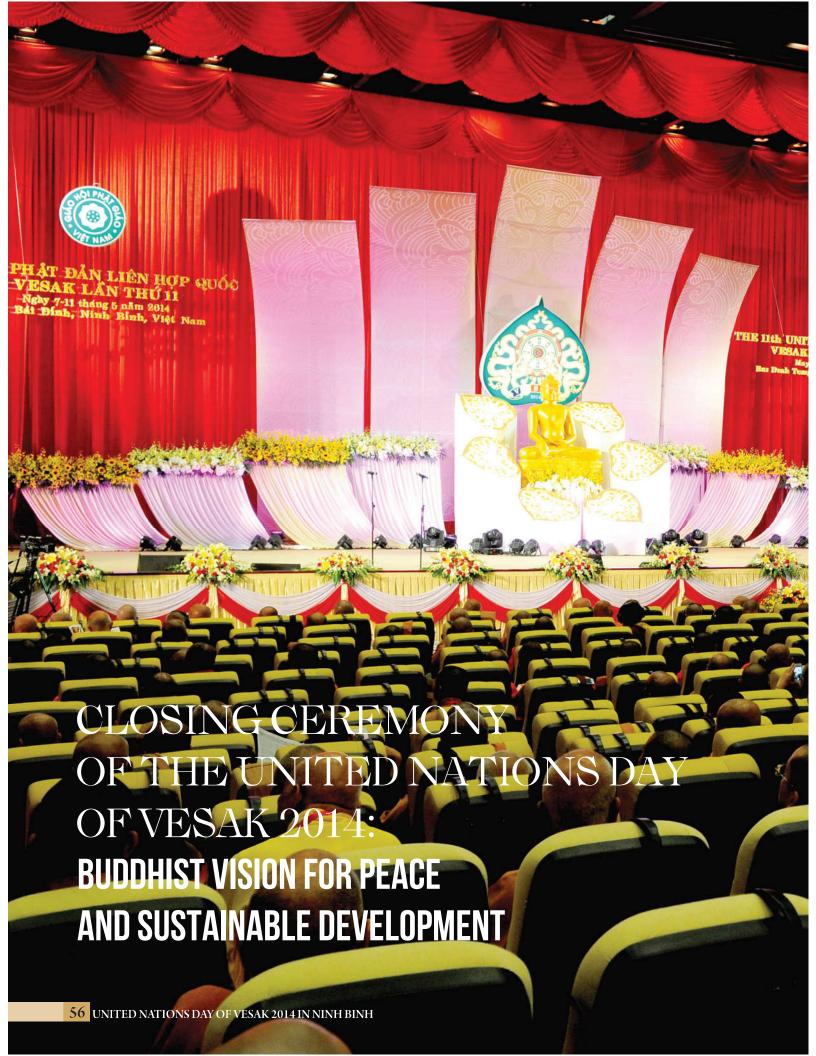


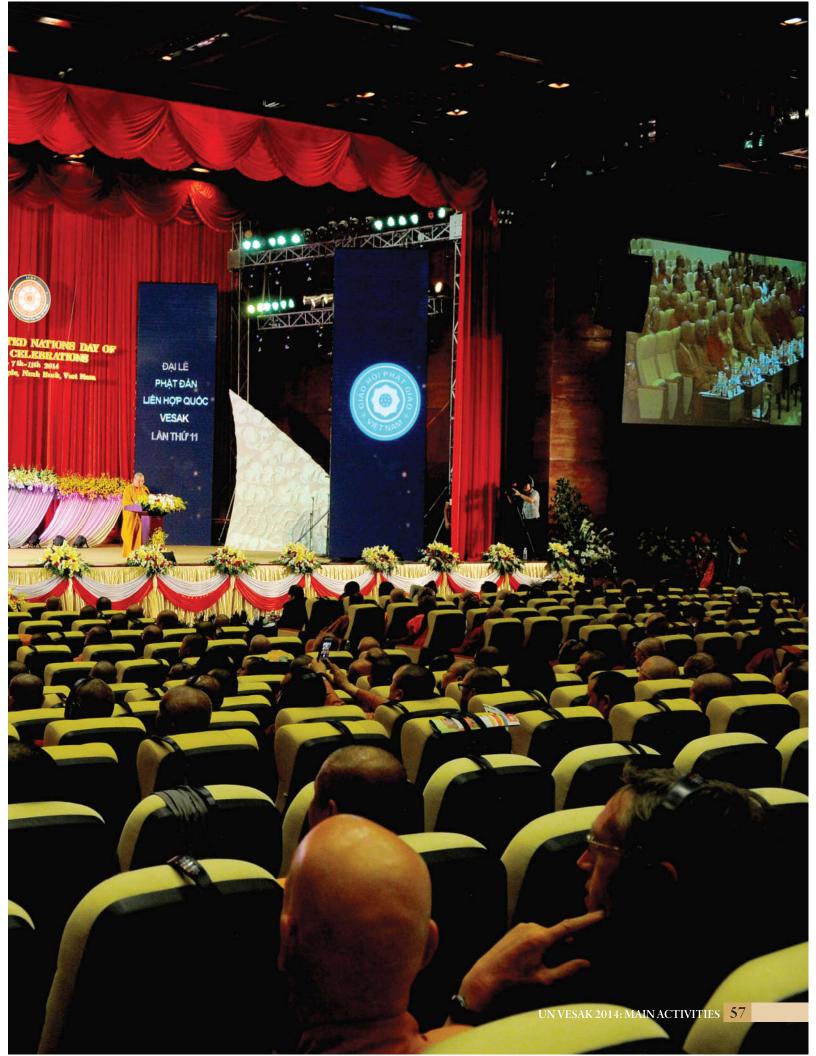
The discussion scene at the UN Vesak forums 2014. Photo: Ngo Dung











On the afternoon of May 10, 2014, at Bai Dinh Pagoda, Ninh Binh Province, the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014 officially concluded, marking the end of the largest international Buddhist event ever held in Vietnam. The celebration attracted over 10,000 attendees, including 1,500 international delegates from 95 countries and territories, all gathering in a spirit of global solidarity and shared responsibility.

United Nations Day of Vesak 2014: A Convergence of High-Level Leaders from Vietnam and the World

The Closing Ceremony was attended by numerous senior leaders from Vietnam and abroad. Representing Vietnam were Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Le Ba Trinh (Vice President of the Vietnam Fatherland Front Central Committee), and Pham Dung (Head of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs). Former high-ranking leaders, such as former General Secretary Nong Duc Manh and former President Le Duc Anh, along with other senior officials, also extended their congratulations. On the international front, King Norodom Sihamoni of Cambodia and various diplomatic representatives and international organizations graced the event, adding to its solemnity.

Buddhist and Religious Leaders Speak at the Closing Ceremony

During the Closing Ceremony, prominent Vietnamese Buddhist leaders played a significant role, including Most Venerable Thich Duc Nghiep (Deputy Supreme Patriarch of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha), Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu (Chairman of the Vesak 2014 Organizing Committee), Most Venerable Thich Thien Nhon (Standing Vice President and General Secretary of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha's Executive Council), Venerable Thich Nhat Tu (Deputy General Secretary of the Organizing Committee), and Venerable Thich Duc Thien (General Secretary of the Organizing Committee). Their speeches not only demonstrated insightful leadership but also contributed significantly to the success of the event.

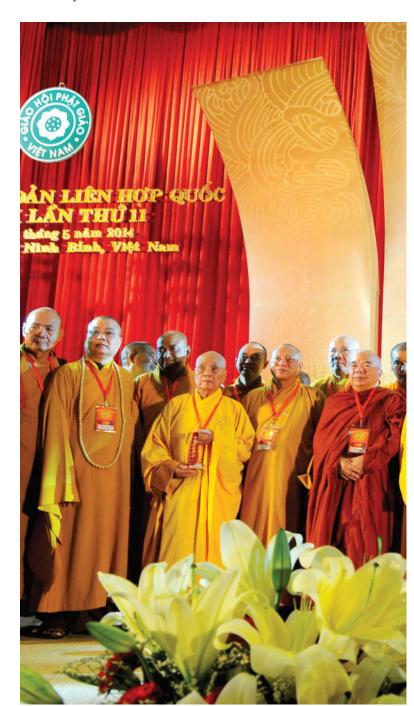
Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, in his Closing Ceremony speech, emphasized that Vesak 2014 was not only a cultural and religious event but also a bridge connecting Vietnam with the international community, fostering peace, cooperation, sustainable development. He expressed his belief that the messages conveyed during the event would soon become a reality in the future.

Report by Venerable Thich Nhat Tu: **Achievements and Future Directions**

In his report, Venerable Thich Nhat Tu highlighted that Vesak 2014 exceeded expectations in terms of scale and impact. The event attracted nearly 1,500 international delegates and tens of thousands of Vietnamese monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists. The organization was carried out professionally, encompassing academic forums, spiritual ceremonies, charitable activities, and diverse cultural performances. Venerable Thich Nhat Tu affirmed that Vesak not only achieved its immediate objectives but also spread the core Buddhist values of peace, compassion, and sustainable development.

Ninh Binh Declaration 2014: A Global **Commitment to Development**

One of the most significant highlights of the ceremony was the Ninh Binh Declaration 2014,



presented by Most Venerable Thich Thien Nhon. The declaration comprised seven articles and 31 points, emphasizing the role of Buddhism in promoting peace, social justice, and sustainable development. Global leaders were called upon to act on three key pillars: environmental protection, economic growth, and social equity. The declaration also advocated for resolving territorial disputes through peaceful means, dialogue, and adherence to international law. Buddhism was recognized as a crucial force in advancing global peace, and Buddhists worldwide were encouraged to actively contribute to addressing issues such as war, terrorism, and violence.

Concluding Vesak with Messages of Peace and Compassion

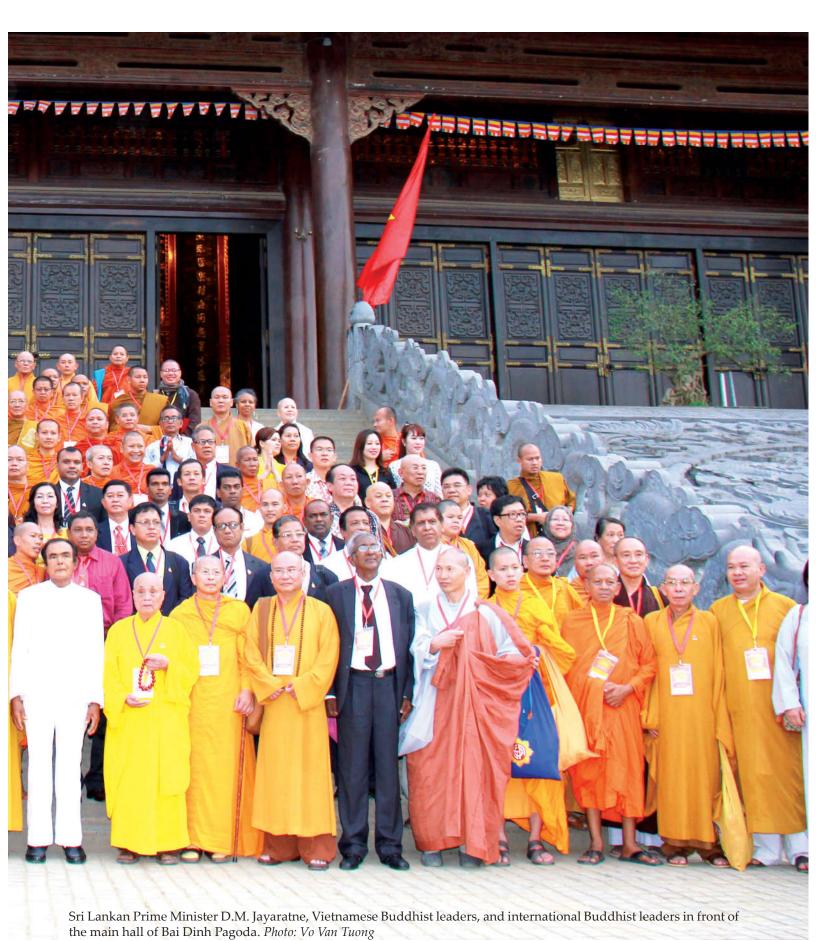
The Closing Ceremony of Vesak concluded with a vibrant cultural performance, delivering messages of peace and compassion to the world. At 7:00 PM on the same day, at the Sakya Buddha Hall of Bai Dinh Pagoda, 1,500 attendees participated in a candle-lit prayer for peace.

The United Nations Day of Vesak 2014 became an international event of profound significance, clearly affirming the role of Vietnamese Buddhism in fostering peace, solidarity, and cooperation among nations. The success of Vesak 2014 not only honored Vietnam's organizational capabilities but also reaffirmed the country's position on the global Buddhist map.

Permanent Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and leaders of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha after the Closing Ceremony of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014. *Photo: Ngo Dung* \$\diamond\$







UN VESAK 2014: MAIN ACTIVITIES 61



Pagoda in Ninh Binh Province, the closing ceremony of the United Nations Vesak Vietnam 2014 marked the end of three days of significant global Buddhist events. This milestone is not only a testament to the leadership of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha but also reflects the global Buddhist community's dedication to peacebuilding and sustainable development, aligned with the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Plenary Session: Summarizing the Achievements of Discussion Groups

At 13:15, the plenary session commenced in the main hall, led by Venerable Dr. Dhammaratana, Vice President of the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV). Representatives from

summarized key outcomes, emphasizing that the discussions centered on the UN's eight Millennium Development Goals. Speakers affirmed that applying Buddhist teachings in daily life would accelerate progress toward these goals, fostering peace and happiness for humanity.

National Records and the Honor of King Toro

During the ceremony, King Toro was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Vietnam Buddhist University, HCM City. Additionally, UN Vesak 2014 set six national records in Vietnam, including the largest peace prayer ceremony, the largest Buddhist-themed painting, the largest Buddhist cultural performance, the most floating lanterns lit for world peace, the largest Buddhist film festival,



and the longest couplet welcoming international and domestic delegates to Vesak.

• The Formal Closing Ceremony: A Solemn Conclusion

At 14:50, the official closing ceremony began, attended by leaders of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and senior government officials such as Venerable Thich Duc Nghiep (Vice Supreme Patriarch), Venerable Thich Thien Nhon (Standing Vice Chairman of the Sangha Council), Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu (Chairman of the Vesak 2014 Organizing Committee), Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, and other local leaders. International attendees included King Toro, His Holiness Tep Vong (Supreme Patriarch of Cambodian Buddhism), and representatives from various global Buddhist organizations.

In his closing address, Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu affirmed the overwhelming success of Vesak 2014, which brought together delegates from 95 countries and territories. He expressed deep gratitude to the government and sponsors for their indispensable support in ensuring the event's success.

Speeches by Venerable Dhammaratana and Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc

On behalf of the ICDV, Venerable Dhammaratana expressed profound appreciation to the Vietnamese government, emphasizing that Buddhism is inseparable from the lives of the Vietnamese people and the global community. He reiterated that the teachings of the Buddha have the power to bring happiness to all if practiced and applied correctly.

Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, in his speech, recalled the success of Vesak 2008 and Vesak 2014. He highlighted that the UN Vesak Vietnam had become a cultural festival that symbolizes national unity and international solidarity. He expressed hope that the messages of peace and compassion shared at this event would continue to spread globally.



Report on the overall results of the group workshops. *Photo: Dang Huy*

Summary Report and Ninh Binh Declaration 2014

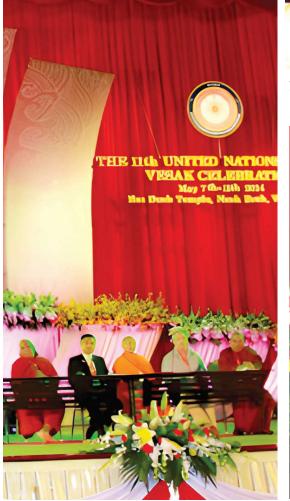
At 15:42, Venerable Thich Duc Thien, Secretary General of the Organizing Committee, presented

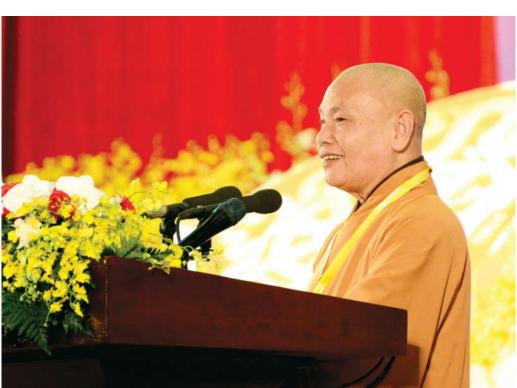
the event's summary report. He emphasized that the discussions revolved around five key themes, all demonstrating Buddhism's contribution to achieving the Millennium United Nations' Development Goals.

At 16:00, Venerable Thich Thien Nhon read the Ninh Binh Declaration 2014, consisting of seven clauses. These focused on sustainable development, peacebuilding, and the peaceful resolution of disputes. declaration also urged world leaders to uphold principles of

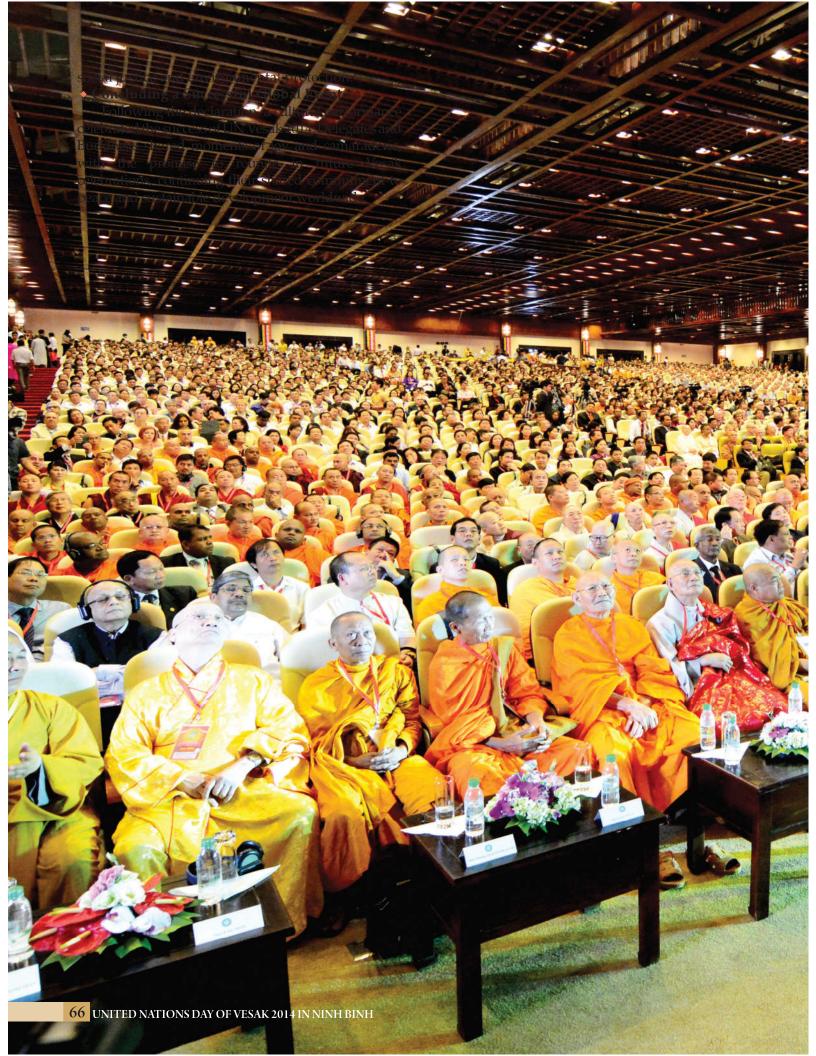


Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc delivered a speech. Photo: Ngo Dung





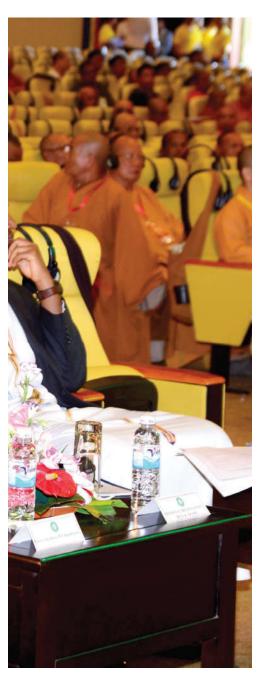
His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon delivered a speech. Photo: Ngo Dung

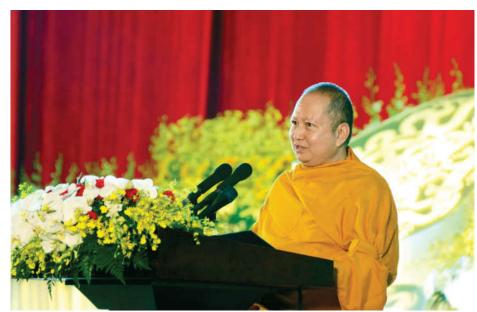




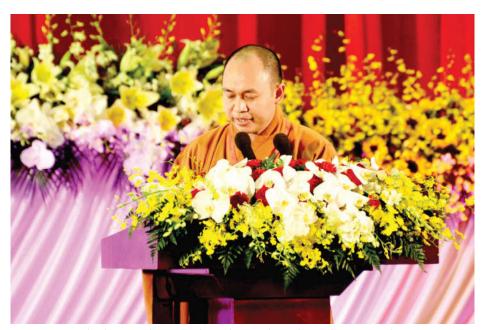


His Holiness Thich Duc Nghiep, Princess of Thailand, King and Queen of Toro at the Closing Ceremony of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014. *Photo: Ngo Dung*





 ${\it Most Ven. Prof. Brahmapundit delivering the Closing Speech. {\it Photo: Ngo Dung}}$



Ven. Thich Duc Thien reading the Ninh Binh Declaration. Photo: Ngo Dung



Photo: Nguyen Vuong





His Holiness Thich Duc Nghiep and Professor Le Manh That presenting an honorary doctorate from the Vietnam Buddhist Academy in Ho Chi Minh City to King Toro. *Photo: Ngo Dung*



The Vietnam Records Organization presenting Vesak 2014 record awards. Photo: Ngo Dung





2014 NINH BINH DECLARATION

Made on the Occasion of the 11th United Nations Day of Vesak May 7-11, 2014, Bai Dinh Convention Center, Ninh Binh, Vietnam

Whereas, we, the participants, from 95 countries and regions, have come together for the International Buddhist Conference on the United Nations Vesak Vietnam at Bai Dinh Convention Center held from May 07-11, 2014 (B.E. 2558);

Whereas, we are most grateful and appreciative for the hospitality of the National Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and the support of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in hosting this most auspicious gathering. After four days of meetings, academic presentations, learned discussions, cultural events and Buddhist fellowship, the assembled delegates make and adopt this Declaration;

Whereas, we, came together in this Assembly pursuant to that resolution approved on 15th December 1999 at the General Assembly of the United Nations, Session No. 54, Agenda Item 174, Resolution 54/115. Therein it was declared that Vesak, which falls on the Full Moon day in the month of May, will be internationally recognized and observed at the United Nations Headquarters and its Regional Offices from the Year 2000 onwards. The United Nations Vesak Vietnam is jointly celebrated by all Buddhist traditions as a thrice sacred day. It serves to foster mutual understanding and cooperation amongst all Buddhist traditions, organizations and individuals through ongoing dialogue between Buddhist leaders and scholars addressing those issues of universal concern. As a result of our deliberations we adopt and publish the following message of peace based on the Buddha's teaching of wisdom and compassion; and,

Whereas, coming together to discuss the issues related to the "Buddhist Perspectives towards Achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals", we have shared our viewpoints, experiences and research on the latest trends and developments in the various fields and considered deliberately their practical implications.

Now, therefore, at the conclusion of our successful celebrations and meetings we have unanimously resolved the following:

Article 1: General Agreements

1.1. To resolve that in keeping with the World view common to all Buddhists, it is an obligation held individually and collectively to work tirelessly for the attainment of the UN Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) and dedicate ourselves to social engagement for their attainment as a component of our practice and convictions.

- 1.2. To motivate by sending the strongest message to the international community to strengthen all efforts to implement the UN Millennium Development Goals through a collective commitment by all stakeholders.
- 1.3. To utilize the Buddha's teaching as spiritual guidance for the overall well-being, development and progress of all sentient beings, and for the full implementation of the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Article 2: Buddhist Responses to Sustainable Development and Social Change

- **2.1.** To recognize the interdependence of sustainable development - social, economic, and environmental, emphasizing the universal actualization of our full human potential as the ultimate goal of sustainable development.
- **2.2.** To contribute to creating a new foundation of initiatives, reinforcing the framework of international action leading to sustainable development and global social development.
- **2.3.** To urge global leaders to base sustainable development on the three pillars of environmental protection, economic development, and social justice, emphasizing the principles of equality, social justice, human rights protection and the promotion of education.

Article 3: Peace-building and Post-conflict Recovery

- 3.1. To promote peaceful settlement of conflicts, respect for life, ending of violence and practice of loving kindness, non-violence through dialogue and cooperation.
- 3.2. To urge political leaders to settle the disputes related to sovereignty, territorial integrity, and jurisdiction rights of exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and continental shelf through negotiations and other peaceful measures in confirmity with international laws including United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982), for the sake of maintaining world peace and stability.
- 3.3. To encourage Buddhists to be more proactive in promoting peace, which is central to the teachings of the Buddha; and, in particular, spreading the Buddha's wisdom on the interconnectedness of all humans as a global family and the shared consequences of their actions.

- 3.4. To value peace both intrinsically and extrinsically, by engaging Buddhist believers around the World to address the contemporary issues of war, violence, intolerance and terrorism which threatens the peace and stability of all society.
- **3.5.** To motivate and hold Nations morally responsible for achieving peaceful ideals: understanding universal values, virtues, rights and responsibilities, and particularly the Buddhist culture of non-violence, compassion and tolerance.
- **3.6.** To call for a universal peace education project, which would become the new paradigm for peace governance.
- 3.7. To reaffirm the common desire and fundamental human right of all people to live in peace with one another and reaffirming that the principal aim of the United Nations is the maintenance of international peace and security.

Article 4: Buddhist Responses to Global Warming and Environmental Protection

- 4.1. To acknowledge that the effects of technologically-based solutions are unpredictable and reaffirm that the establishment of a new environmental ethic is necessary incorporating Buddhist virtue ethics and responsibility.
- 4.2. To urge all governmental and nongovernmental organizations together with Buddhist community to strive toward sustainable economic and social development, stressing the need to balance such development with the preservation of the environment.
- 4.3. To foster Buddhist environmentalism as instrumental to further prevention and reversal of global warming and the furtherance of environmental protection.

Article 5: Buddhist Contributions to Healthy Living

- **5.1.** To recognize that the healthy living of the individual is characterized by physical, emotional, mental and spiritual growth, and the fostering of such growth is the ultimate goal of sustainable human happiness.
- **5.2.** To engage collaboratively with governmental and non-governmental health organizations in holistic health programs, combining the Buddhist principles of mind-body harmony with modern medical science, for the eradication of disease, child mortality and to improve pre-natal care in the developing World.
- **5.3.** To evaluate the effects of healthy living and facilitate the Buddhist healthy living program by applying Buddhist meditation techniques.
- 5.4. To recognize that core to healthy living is meeting the fundamental needs of the individual, including clean water, nutrition, housing, ensuring the physical and spiritual well-being and upholding the dignity of the person.

Article 6: Buddhist Educations and University Level Curriculum

- 6.1. To work tirelessly for universal education in the 21st century, emphasizing the integration of wisdom and compassion in caring for the environment, cultivating synergy between school subjects and disciplines, and incorporating ethics and a sense of community to the existing approach for acquiring skills for economic and social development within the curricula and syllabi at all levels of education, in order to realize the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals of "achieving universal primary education" and beyond.
- **6.2.** To encourage the incoporation of Buddhist history and philosophy in the curriculum of primary and secondary education which focuses on world and social studies.
- 6.3. To develop a Buddhist proposal for transformational universal education, which though secular based seeks to initiate an educational program that not only prepares children academically, but also emotionally and spiritually and uses innovative techniques to consolidate the contemporary reforms of national systems of education.
- acknowledge To the fundamental importance of Buddha's teachings relating to the inclusion of instruction in morals, virtues and ethics in contributing to the promotion, protection and effective realization of all human rights.
- **6.5.** To encourage Buddhists from all countries and traditions to study both secular and Buddhist approaches to mindfulness and to take a more active role in the ongoing integration of mindfulness into education at all levels.
- 6.6. To support continued scholarship in understanding the evolution and spread of Buddhist philosophy and culture in order to foster greater cooperation and participation between all Buddhists, regardless of traditions.

Article 7: Policy Implications and Conclusion

- 7.1. We request that these well considered findings be incorporated into the new program of the UN Millennium Development Goals.
- 7.2. We proclaim that it is time for the World community to begin an honest reflection about the Buddhist solution and its utilization in today's rapidly changing world.
- 7.3. We proclaim that Buddhist ethics have cultural value to contribute to the development of a more compassionate society and are capable of building sustainable, equitable and caring political systems, economies, and societies.
- 7.4. We proclaim that Buddhist community can respond decisively to the challenges of the UN Millennium Goals.

7.5. We request that World leaders collaborate with Buddhists to develop systems that universally encourage the obtainment of full socio-economy and compassionate potentials and thereby create a World in which we all want to live.

7.6. We request that state governments, civil societies, businesses, families and individuals, regardless of faith or tradition, adopt moral and ethical virtues.

7.7. We proclaim that instrumental to the practice of Buddhism at all levels, individually and collectively,

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is Social Engagement wherein the insights from meditation practice and teachings are brought to bear in physical and meaningful ways to address situations of social, political, environmental, and economic suffering and injustice.

7.8. We encourage the expansion of Buddhist NGOs which actively and substantively engage in disaster relief, social welfare and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Done this 10th day of May, 2014, at Bai Dinh Convention Center, Ninh Binh, Vietnam.







Photo: Ngo Dung

On May 10, 2014, during the closing ceremony of the UN Vesak Vietnam 2014 at Bai Dinh Pagoda (Ninh Binh), Venerable Thich Duc Thien, Secretary-General of the International Organizing Committee of Vesak 2014, delivered the final report. Most Venerable Thich Thien Nhon, Standing Vice President and Secretary-General of the Executive Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, read the "Ninh Binh Declaration 2014" - an important document reflecting the global Buddhist community's commitment to peace, cooperation, and sustainable development.

Key Points of the Ninh Binh Declaration

The Ninh Binh Declaration consists of 7 articles and 31 points, emphasizing that individuals and groups must continuously strive to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The declaration affirms that active participation in social initiatives aimed at realizing these goals is an integral part of Buddhist faith and practice.

World leaders are urged to prioritize three pillars of sustainable development: environmental protection, economic growth, and social equity. The declaration also underscores the necessity of safeguarding human rights and promoting education, recognizing these as fundamental elements in building a peaceful and stable world.

Promoting Reconciliation and Upholding **International Law**

A critical aspect of the Ninh Binh Declaration is its call for political leaders to resolve territorial





Ven. Thich Duc Thien reading the Ninh Binh Declaration Photo: Ngo Dung

NINH BÌNH DECLARATION 2014: A COMMITMENT TO PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

and sovereignty disputes through peaceful means. It strongly condemns the use of force or threats of force and highlights the importance of dialogue and cooperation to maintain global peace. Disputes related to exclusive economic zones (EEZ) and continental shelves are encouraged to be resolved in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982.

• Buddhism's Role in Building Peace

The Ninh Binh Declaration urges Buddhists worldwide to take a more active role in promoting peace, applying the wisdom of the Buddha to address contemporary issues such as war, violence, and terrorism. Buddhists are encouraged to

embody compassion, non-violence, and engage in peace-building activities both at the personal and societal levels, fostering a global family where all are interconnected and interdependent.

Conclusion

The Ninh Binh Declaration 2014 marks a significant step forward for the global Buddhist community in its efforts to contribute to a peaceful, stable, and sustainable world. Through a strong commitment to the United Nations' objectives, Buddhism reaffirms its indispensable role in advancing reconciliation, resolving conflicts, protecting the environment, and promoting social justice worldwide.





I. Preamble

On 15th December 1999, representatives from thirty-four countries proposed to the General Assembly of the United Nations that the full moon day in the month of May be recognized and observed at the United Nations Headquarters and its Regional Offices as the United Nations Day of Vesak. The General Assembly so resolved (Agenda Item 174 of Session No. 54) and, accordingly, the UN Vesak Vietnam was instituted in the year 2000 with the support of all Buddhist traditions.

In pursuance of that Resolution, we, participants from 95 countries and regions, have come together on May 7 - 11, 2014 (B.E. 2558) for the celebration of the Buddha's Birth, Enlightenment, and Mahaparinibbana. For only the second time since its inception, the gracious and warm People of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in collaboration with the National Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS)'s Executive Council opened their hearts and their doors to the Buddhist World Community.

The distinguished Guests of the Conference are as follows: His Majesties the King and Queen of Tooro Kingdom, Africa; His Excellency the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka; His Excellency Nguyen Sinh Hung, President of National Asembly of Vietnam; His Excellency Nguyen Thien Nhan, President of Vietnamese Fatherland Front; His Excellency Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam; Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand; His Excellency Nguyen Van An, Former President of National Asembly; His Excellency Le Kha Phieu, Secretary General of Communist Party and several Vietnamese ministers, deputy ministers and above 20 ambassadors.

The Celebration got off with the Gala Dinner held at the National Convention Centre, Hanoi on 7 May 2014 graced by the World Buddhist leaders hosted by His Excellency Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Deputy Prime Minister of Socialist Republic of Vietnam.



THE REPORT OF THE 11TH UNITED NATIONS DAY OF VESAK CELEBRATION IN 2014, BAI DINH, VIETNAM



International delegates attentively listening to the final report of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014. Photo: Ngo Dung

II. Academics

This year the UN Vesak Vietnam celebration was conducted in conjunction with the third meeting of the International Association of Buddhist Universities held in the historical, stunning and ecologically wondrous Ninh Binh province and the Bai Dinh Pagoda. The focus of both Conferences was the Buddhist Perspective towards Achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals. The participants explored Buddhist contributions, and the overall shortcomings, in the World's progress towards the

accomplishment of the MDG's.

Amid the fellowship and pageantry of the Vesak Celebration, the Delegates attended to the difficult task of reflecting upon the World's progress towards the attainment of the MDGs. Listening and participating in the discussion of some 162 topics in English and 65 topics in Vietnamese presenting by the leading Buddhist academic scholars in the World and Vietnam, the assembly learned of our collective successes and failures in attaining the MDGs. Ultimately, resulting in the 2014 Ninh Binh Declaration, the assembled delegates resolved a framework for future engagement in these pressing social, political, economic and environmental issues.

The MDGs were discussed in five areas of concern: sustainable development and social change; response to global warming and environmental protection; healthy living; global peace-building; and, promotion of Buddhist education. Additionally, the Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative (ECAI) work concerning Buddhist Maritime Culture and Technology was elaborated upon. Our exploration of these topics demonstrated both the contributions of the World Buddhist community and the shortcomings we have found in the efforts to attain the MDGs by their slated target date of 2015.

III. Ritual

A conference established to celebrate the Day of Vesak would not be complete without a component of ritual and ceremony. A traditional Buddha Bathing Ceremony was just one of several opportunities for delegates and guests to share their devotion to the Buddha. The evenings brought opportunities for practice as well. With a large gathering and chanting for World peace on the ninth to a well-attended Candlelight Possession on the last night of the Celebration, delegates were able to come together from all schools of Buddhism to demonstrate their devotion to the Three Jewels. The rituals concluded with a flower parade on the tenth that showed the creativity and craftsmanship of our Vietnamese florists.

IV. Pageantry and Fellowship

The opportunities for the delegates and guests to join in fellowship and to enjoy the hospitality of the Vietnamese people were weaved throughout the program of the four day conference.

Each day the dining halls provided some ten thousand meals, three times a day, to those assembled at the Bai Dinh Temple complex. Prepared by some 600 chefs and cooks, the meals represented the best of Vietnamese cuisine. Vegetarian menus were available, along with some western fare for those delegates that desired more familiar meals.

Mealtime provided the opportunity for the delegates to meet other brothers and sisters in the Dharma and to learn about differing cultures and make lasting friendships. Though at times seemingly confused and hectic, the communal form of dining and seating allowed for the greatest diversity at each table. The opportunity to forge a friendship that will last long after the last noodle in a bowl of Pho is consumed was most assuredly a benefit of the exquisite food service.

Each evening, the delegates were treated to the very best entertainment that could be provided. From the elaborate stages and dance of the Hanoi National Dance Company, to traditional songs of the Vietnamese operetta, the delegates and guests experienced the culture of Vietnam in a grand outdoor theater constructed in the heart of the Temple complex. Among the performances were also representatives and troupes of many other countries and cultures including Sri Lanka, China, Thailand and Korea. Even when during the first evening's performance the electricity was briefly interrupted, the crowd was able to become the performers, as they were led in song by Ven. Thich Nhat Tu until the lights came back on - true to the performer's creed, that the show must go on. Truly, the evening performances were as diverse a multi-cultural display as the dishes that were served on the buffet line. It was a feast for the mind.

In spare moments during the Conference, delegates were able to wander the long halls of

the complex that had been turned into galleys of art and antiquities. Hundreds of pieces of contemporary Buddhist art by more 100 Vietnamese and Indian artists, photographers showed the breadth of how Buddhism's message depicted in various media. From oils, acrylics, watercolors and clay, the finest Buddhist art of today was displayed alongside the art of antiquity. Artifacts from the entire age of Vietnamese Buddhism were displayed.

V. The International Vesak 2014 Buddhist Film Festival

One should not forget the first Buddhist Film Festival to be conducted at an ICDV celebration. "For the 1st time the United Nations Day of Vesak we have most powerful way of bringing into focus the compassionate message of the Buddha through the medium of Films. The International Vesak 2014 Buddhist Film Festival in Vietnam is the continuation of the Film Festival initiated in Sri Lanka in 2009, celebrating Vesak.



We welcome film makers from 47 countries including Singapore, Canada, France, United Kingdom, Germany, South Africa, Mexico, Bhutan, Australia, Turkey, USA, Italy, Spain, New Zealand, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, South Korea, Finland, Irag, China, Austria, Portugal, Spain, Macao, Bangladesh, Georgia, Argentina, United Arab Emirates, Netherlands, Israel, Kosovo, Japan, India, Nepal, Hong Kong, Poland, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Lithuania, Romania, Vietnam, Belgium, Hungary, Iceland, Thailand, Russian Federation, Malaysia.

Some films were screened and judged with the best being awarded for their cinematic values and creativity. The Film Festival has 5 categories: Best Feature Film, Best Television Series, Best Documentary Film, Best Short Film and Best Animation Film.

VI. Conclusion

In the five years since Vietnam was last honored to host the United Nations Day of Vesak Celebration, the Vietnamese National Sangha has planned and worked toward its goal of hosting this international celebration again. The Vietnam Buddhist Sangha undertook a grand undertaking - to hold a major international event, in a relatively remote, religiously significant venue. So bold was the effort, a Conference Hall even had to be constructed within 90 days to facilitate the celebrants and their distinguished guests.

Abounding with challenges of lodging, transportation, food service, and public safety, the 11th UNDV celebration afforded the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha the opportunity to display the very best of Vietnam to its international guests and delegates. Vietnam Buddhist Sangha flawlessly rose to the occasion and provided a high quality celebration and experience to its guests. hospitality of Vietnam was put on display and a highly successful 11th UN Vesak Vietnam Celebration was concluded.



Leaders of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and distinguished guests taking a commemorative photo at the Closing Ceremony. Photo: Quang Dai

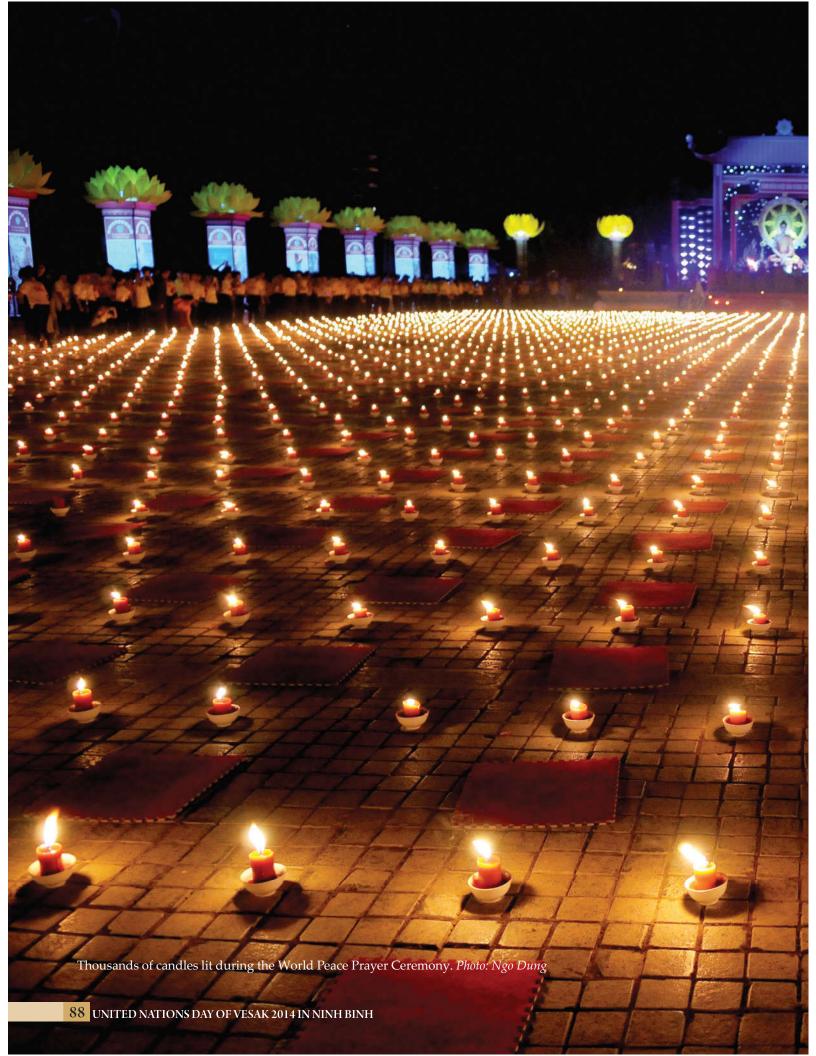
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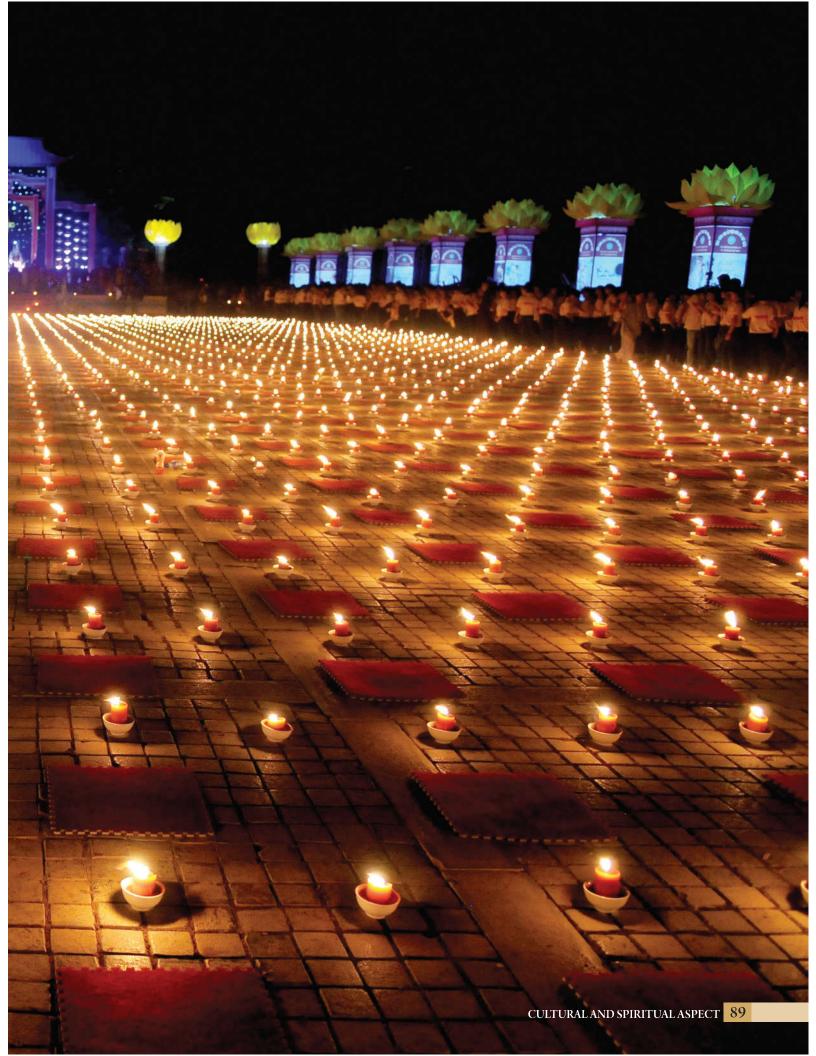
CULTURAL AND SPRIRITUAL ASPECT





The Organizing Committee observing a moment of silence and praying for world peace at the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014



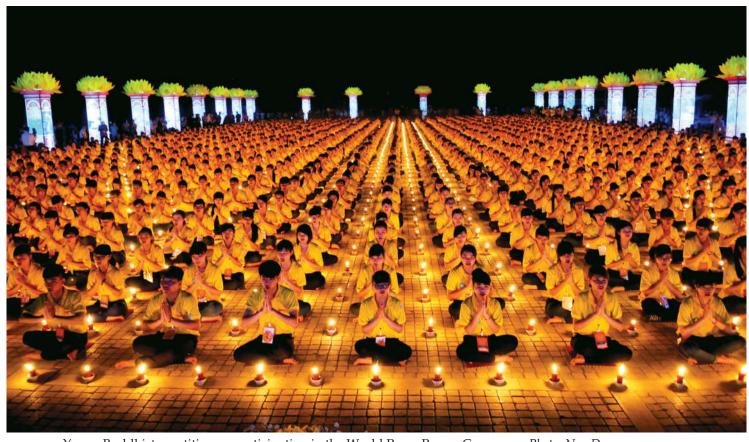




The organizing committee held a moment of silence to pray for world peace at the UN Vesak 2014. Photo: Ngo Dung



The Vietnamese Buddhist community participates in the World Peace Prayer Ceremony. Photo: Ngo Dung



Young Buddhist practitioners participating in the World Peace Prayer Ceremony. Photo: Ngo Dung



Young Buddhist practitioners participating in the World Peace Prayer Ceremony. Photo: Ngo Dung







Buddhist delegations visit the Trang An scenic complex. Photo: Anh Vuong







On April 28, 2014, at the Ho Chi Minh City Fine Arts Association, the Buddhist art exhibition celebrating the 2014 United Nations Vesak officially opened. Organized by the "Today's Buddhist Charity Fund" (chaired by Most Venerable Thich Nhat Tu), this event attracted numerous artists and art enthusiasts while carrying a profound humanitarian mission.

Artistic Creations Reflecting Compassionate Values

This exhibition featured 52 artists presenting 80 unique works, crafted from various mediums such as oil, lacquer, ink, iron-pen, printed paintings, and one ceramic sculpture. The works span a range of subjects, from landscapes of Vietnam to depictions of everyday life, with a special focus on lotus flowers—symbolizing purity and Buddhist spirit.

Beyond being a showcase of extraordinary art, the exhibition also served a charitable purpose. Forty percent of the proceeds from the artworks sold were donated to "Today's Buddhist Charity Fund," with the funds directed towards the construction of a charity center for cancer patients. This reflects the Buddhist spirit of compassion, not only through art but also through tangible action, aiding those in need.

Endorsement and Support from the Buddhist Community

At the opening ceremony, Venerable Thich Nhu Tin, Vice Chairman of the Ho Chi Minh City Buddhist Sangha, praised the efforts of the charity and the participating artists. He emphasized that this event was not only a tribute to Buddha but also a demonstration of the Buddhist practice of compassion, soothing the suffering of the less fortunate, in accordance with Buddha's teachings on nurturing kindness.



Most Ven. Thich Nhu Tinand Venerable Thich Nhat Tu inaugurated the exhibition.



Most Ven. Thich Nhu Tin presenting flowers to artists participating in the Buddhist art exhibition

 $He also \, presented \, flowers \, and \, expressed \, gratitude$ to the artists for their significant contributions in promoting Buddhist culture through art and supporting this meaningful charitable endeavor.

• Exhibition Plans and Charity Fund Expansion

Following the success of the exhibition in Ho Chi Minh City, the "Today's Buddhist Charity Fund" plans to organize further exhibitions in Ninh Binh and other locations. These exhibitions aim to expand the scope of charitable activities and introduce Vietnamese Buddhist culture to a broader audience, especially during the UN Vesak 2014 celebrations. The initiative not only promotes

cultural values but also raises funds to support those facing hardships.

• Exhibition Highlights and Future Prospects

The exhibition runs from April 28 to May 9, offering the public the opportunity to view unique Buddhist artworks while contributing to a noble cause. The Buddhist Art Exhibition for the 2014 UN Vesak is more than just a cultural and artistic event; it marks a significant milestone in blending Buddhist compassion with creative expression, working toward building a society filled with kindness and love.



His Holiness Thich Tri Quang, Most Ven. Thich Giac Toan, and Most Ven. Thich Quang Tung cutting the ribbon to inaugurate the Buddhist art exhibition at Bai Dinh Pagoda. *Photo: Ngo Dung*





A 10-meter-long oil painting of Bodhisattva Thich Quang Duc self-immolating to protect Buddhism during Buddha's Birthday Festival in 1963. *Photo: Ngo Dung*











Delegates admiring Buddhist artworks and photographs at the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014. *Photo: Ngo Dung*



The collective group of oil painting artists depicting Bodhisattva Thich Quang Duc taking a commemorative photo with attendees. *Photo: Ngo Dung*





A photographic corner of the Buddhist Scriptures Exhibition: Past and Present





The scripture book is printed using woodblocks from Vinh Nghiem Pagoda, Bac Giang. Illustration. Ánh: Vietnam Photo Newspaper

EXHIBITION OF ANCIENT AND PRESENT BUDDHIST CRIPTURES TO CELEBRATE VESAK 2014

In honor of the 2014 United Nations Day of Vesak, a special exhibition showcasing 222 Buddhist texts, both ancient and modern, was held from May 7 to May 13, 2014, at the Liễu Quán Cultural Center in Huế City. This exhibition marks the beginning the Buddha's Birthday Week (Buddhist Calendar 2558) and stands as a tribute to this major international celebration of Buddhism.

Presenting Treasured Buddhist Works Across Centuries

The exhibition of Buddhist texts in Huế drew significant attention from monastics, Buddhists, and

Buddhist scholars alike. Organized in collaboration with renowned cultural and literary entities such as the collector and archaeologist Trần Đình Sơn, Thiện Trí Thức Cultural Corporation, and Hà Nội Bookstore from Ho Chi Minh City, the exhibition featured 222 Buddhist works divided into three main categories: ancient Sino-Vietnamese texts, modern Vietnamese-language Buddhist publications, and contemporary Buddhist works.

The first section of the exhibition highlighted ancient Sino-Vietnamese Buddhist texts, including rare woodblock prints from Vinh Nghiêm Pagoda (Bắc Giang). These works are invaluable historical artifacts, representing the transmission of Buddhist teachings across centuries. The second section focused on modern Vietnamese-language publications, reflecting the modernization of Buddhism in Vietnam. The final section showcased Buddhist texts, providing contemporary comprehensive overview of how Buddhist literature continues to play a crucial role in preserving and spreading the Dharma today.

Disseminating Buddhist Texts to the Public

In addition to being a platform for showcasing these sacred texts, the exhibition served as an opportunity to distribute Buddhist literature. Organizers gave away copies of Buddhist texts to monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists attending the event. A dedicated book distribution area was also set up, allowing visitors to purchase newly published Buddhist texts, offering them deeper access to Buddhist philosophy and culture.

Opening Ceremony and Recitation of the Lotus Sutra: A Sacred Start to Buddha's Birthday Week

Coinciding with the exhibition, an opening ceremony for the recitation of the Lotus Sutra was held at Tù Đàm Pagoda, formally launching the Buddha's Birthday Week. Presiding over the ceremony was Most Venerable Thích Đức Phương,

Vice Chairman of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha's Council of Elders and Head of the Buddhist Sangha in Thừa Thiên - Huế Province. Numerous monastics from prominent temples, monasteries, and nunneries, as well as a large gathering of monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists from Huế and surrounding regions, were also present.

The recitation of the Lotus Sutra continued throughout the week, with prayers offered for national peace and security, the longevity of Buddhism, and world harmony. This spiritual activity is a key part of the week's celebration, inviting all attendees to partake in religious rituals that aspire toward collective peace and the wellbeing of all sentient beings.

Conclusion

The exhibition of Buddhist texts in Hue. highlighting the evolution of Buddhist literature from ancient times to the present, is a significant cultural event in the Buddha's Birthday Week. It is a powerful reminder of Buddhism's enduring presence in Vietnam and an opportunity for the Buddhist community and admirers to explore and appreciate the spiritual and cultural contributions of Buddhism over the centuries. This exhibition underscores the aspiration toward a future marked by peace, compassion, and the collective happiness of all beings.



A corner of the exhibition featuring Ancient and Modern Buddhist Scriptures. Photo: Song Huong Magazine



A BLEND OF CULTURE AND SPIRITUALITY

In early May 2014, the streets, alleys, and rivers of Hue were imbued with a serene and peaceful Buddhist atmosphere as the city prepared to welcome Vesak 2014, a United Nations Day of Vesak. As one of Vietnam's most significant Buddhist centers, Hue consistently hosts a range of cultural and spiritual activities during Buddhist celebrations, with Vesak being a key international event.

• Lotus Flowers: The sacred symbol of Buddhism shines on the Perfume River

Among the activities celebrating Vesak, seven enormous lotus flowers on the Perfume River became a standout feature. Each flower, with a diameter of 7.6 meters and a height of 3.7 meters, crafted from iron frames and covered in pink silk, symbolizes the seven sacred steps taken by the Buddha upon his birth. These lotus flowers, anchored to floating platforms in the river, were lit up on the evening of May 6, marking the beginning of the 2558 Buddhist calendar Vesak week in Hue, while also welcoming Vesak 2014 at Bai Dinh Pagoda in Ninh Binh.

The banks of the Perfume River were illuminated by the soft glow of these grand lotus blooms, offering visitors a sense of awe and reverence. The image of these radiant flowers floating in the river perfectly represents the purity and harmonious blend of art and Buddhist spirituality.

• The vibrant flower carriage parade and cultural activities

Beyond the Perfume River, Hue's central streets were adorned with Buddhist colors in preparation for the flower carriage parade, set to take place on the evening of May 13 (the 15th day of the lunar month). Beautifully decorated carriages featuring Buddha images, lotus flowers, and other Buddhist symbols captivated the attention of both locals and visitors alike.

Simultaneously, along the streets and around Nghinh Luong Pavilion, a series of cultural performances, Dharma talks, and charitable activitiesincluding donations to the underprivileged and disabled-took place, spreading the compassion and loving-kindness central to Buddhism. These events not only showcased the unity of Hue's Buddhist community but also attracted broad participation from people all over the country.

Buddha Bathing and Procession: A sacred Vesak ritual

One of the most significant ceremonies during Vesak week is the Buddha bathing and procession, scheduled for 5:00 PM on May 12 at Dieu De National Pagoda in Phu Hau Ward. This traditional Buddhist ritual honors and commemorates the Buddha's birth. After the bathing ceremony, the faithful will accompany the Buddha image from Dieu De Pagoda to Tu Dam Pagoda, the heart of Buddhism in Hue, creating a solemn and deeply emotional atmosphere.

Traditional Hue singing on the Perfume River and the lantern release ceremony

Visitors to Hue during Vesak 2014 will not only

experience the sacredness of the celebrations but also have the chance to enjoy traditional Hue singing aboard dragon boats along the Perfume River. On the evening of May 11, hundreds of floating lanterns will be released into the river as part of a prayer ceremony for peace and prosperity. The soft glow of the lanterns, combined with the tranquil melodies of traditional songs, will create a poetic and deeply spiritual scene along the river.

Conclusion

Vesak celebrations in Hue are not only a time to honor and commemorate the Buddha's birth but also an opportunity for both locals and visitors to immerse themselves in a deeply spiritual and cultural experience. From the radiant lotus flowers on the Perfume River to the sacred Buddha bathing rituals, Hue has truly become a center of compassion, love, and peace, reflecting the very essence of Buddhism.



Photo: Dan Tri Newspaper



Photo: Giac Ngo Newspaper

THE VESAK CELEBRATION PL.2558 AT VIETNAM QUOC TU: A MAJOR SPIRITUAL EVENT HONORS THE SPIRIT OF **COMPASSION AND HARMONY**

On May 13, 2014 (the 15th day of the fourth lunar month), the Executive Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) of Ho Chi Minh City solemnly held the official Vesak Celebration PL.2558 at Vietnam Quoc Tu. The ceremony, starting at 6 AM, gathered a large number of dignitaries, monks, nuns, Buddhist followers, and government officials, all coming together to honor this significant event.

Monks and Lay Buddhists Gather from Across the City

From early morning, thousands of monks, nuns, and Buddhist followers from various districts,

pagodas, and monasteries across Ho Chi Minh City assembled at Vietnam Quoc Tu. The temple grounds, filled with devotees in reverence, were transformed into a sacred space as all present focused on offering homage to the Buddha. The weather, as forecasted, was pleasant with clear skies, providing a perfect setting for the celebration.

• The Main Altar and Solemn Religious Ceremonies

The Vesak altar was meticulously adorned with the sacred lotus flower—an emblem of the Buddha's purity and enlightenment. By 6 AM, dignitaries from the Council of Elders (HĐCM) and the Executive



Most Venerable Thich Duc Nghiep read the message from the Supreme Patriarch. Photo: Giac Ngo Newspaper.



Mr. Hứa Ngọc Thuận, Vice Chairman of the People's Committee of the City, spoke. Photo: Giac Ngo Newspaper

Council (HDTS), along with Ho Chi Minh City officials and representatives from other faiths, gathered at the altar. The presence of approximately 4,000 monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists created an atmosphere of deep reverence and sanctity.

 Address from Buddhist Leaders and City Officials During the ceremony, Most Venerable Thich Duc Nghiep, Vice Chairman of the Council of Elders of the VBS, delivered the Vesak 2014 message, emphasizing the sacred significance of Vesak and urging all to follow the Buddha's teachings of compassion to build a life of peace and happiness.

On behalf of the city's leadership, Mr. Hua Ngoc Thuan, Vice Chairman of the Ho Chi Minh



His Holiness Thich Tri Quang, senior dignitaries of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, and distinguished guests at the 2014 Buddha's Birthday Celebration. Photo: Giac Ngo Newspaper

City People's Committee, expressed his honor in attending the celebration. He highlighted the longstanding bond between Buddhism and the nation, stating, "Buddhism in Vietnam has accompanied the nation throughout its history, and this year's Vesak Celebration is an opportunity to strengthen solidarity and contribute to the building of a peaceful, just, and prosperous society."

Spiritual Ceremony and Prayers for World Peace

Following the flag-raising ceremony, all attendees observed a moment of silence in memory of the late Most Venerable Thich Tri Tinh. The ceremonial procession of the Buddha's birth was then held with great solemnity, beginning with the sound of three resonating bells. All participants entered a state of deep meditation, and offerings of flowers were made by the Buddhists. The Southern and Northern Schools of Buddhism held their

respective prayer sessions, led by Most Venerable Thich Thien Tam and Venerable Thich Le Trang.

Releasing Doves and Balloons to Symbolize Peace

To conclude the ceremony, Buddhist leaders and dignitaries released doves and balloons, symbolizing a universal wish for peace. The sight of doves soaring into the clear blue sky conveyed a powerful message of hope for global peace and the well-being of all sentient beings.

Conclusion

The Vesak Celebration PL.2558 at Vietnam Quoc Tu was a resounding success, filled with solemnity and joy. This event not only allowed Ho Chi Minh City's Buddhist community to honor the Buddha's birth but also reaffirmed the eternal values of compassion, peace, and humanity-core teachings of Buddhism that continue to contribute to the creation of a better world.



The esteemed monks and guests release doves to pray for peace. Photo: Giac Ngo Newspaper

A SERIES OF NATIONWIDE ACTIVITIES **CELEBRATING** VESAK 2014: THE SPIRIT OF **BUDDHISM SPREADS** FROM HUE TO THE **CENTRAL HIGHLANDS**



Thousands of monks, nuns and fellow Buddhists gathered at Tu Dam Pagoda (Hue City) to attend the Buddha Festival 2014. Photo: Cong Hau



The procession of Buddha statues walking from Dieu De Pagoda to Tu Dam Pagoda. Photo: Cong Hau

• At Tu Dam Monastery (Hue): Solemn Ceremonies and a Buddha Statue Procession

On May 13, 2014, at Tu Dam Monastery in Hue City, the Buddhist Sangha of Thua Thien - Hue Province solemnly celebrated the UN Vesak 2014 (Buddhist calendar year 2558). Most Venerable Thich Duc Phuong, Deputy Dharma Master of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha's Council of Elders, together with thousands of monks, nuns, lay Buddhists, and devotees, gathered at Tu Dam Monastery to offer incense, perform Buddhist rituals, and pray for national peace, public welfare, and global harmony. The previous evening, on May 12, a sacred Buddha bathing ceremony and a procession of the Buddha statue from Dieu De Pagoda to Tu Dam Monastery took place, attracting the participation of a large number of monks, nuns, and Buddhists from across the region.

• Quang Tri: Buddhist Festivals and Charity Work

At the Quang Tri Provincial Cultural Center in Dong Ha City, the Provincial Buddhist Sangha organized the Vesak 2014 celebrations, with the participation of local leaders, various departments, and thousands of Buddhist followers. The Buddhist rites were solemnly conducted, including prayers for peace and well-being for all sentient beings. Particularly notable was the charity work led by the Provincial Buddhist Sangha, which allocated nearly VND 500 million to support the underprivileged, the



The Executive Board of the Buddhist Church of Quang Tri Province organized the Vesak Buddha's Birthday Celebration - UN Day 2014. Photo: Nguyen Van Hai

disabled, and victims of Agent Orange, embodying the compassionate spirit of Buddhism.

• Lam Dong: Buddhist Cultural Exhibitions and a **Lantern Boat Parade**

In the joyful atmosphere of the Vesak season, monks, nuns, and Buddhists in Lam Dong conducted various ceremonies to honor the Buddha and offered incense in memory of national heroes and martyrs. In Da Lat City, Buddhist cultural exhibitions, a lantern boat parade, and the release of floating lanterns on Xuan Huong Lake attracted thousands of participants. Most Venerable Thich Minh An delivered the Vesak 2014 message, emphasizing the Buddha's philosophy of peace and compassion, urging everyone to extend love to all sentient beings.



The shimmering lanterns and flower boats on Xuan Huong Lake. Photo: Mai Van Bao



Flower parade celebrating Buddha's birthday on the evening of May 12. Photo: Mai Văn Bảo

• Dak Nong: Guinness Record for the Largest Buddhist Flag

At Phap Hoa Pagoda in Gia Nghia Town, the Provincial Buddhist Sangha of Dak Nong hosted the Vesak 2014 celebrations. Notably, Phap Hoa Pagoda was awarded the Vietnam Guinness Record for the largest Buddhist flag, measuring 12 meters in height and 8 meters in width, composed of 600 lanterns. The flag, crafted over three months by monks, nuns, and Buddhists, symbolizes the deep reverence and devotion of the local Buddhist community.

Conclusion: The Buddhist Spirit **Spreads Across the Nation**

Vesak 2014 was not merely an opportunity for Buddhists nationwide to gather and pay homage to the Buddha but also a chance to spread the values of compassion and peace to all levels of society. From the solemn ceremonies in Hue to the charitable

activities in Quang Tri, Lam Dong, and Dak Nong, this year's Vesak celebration demonstrated the profound connection between religion and life, contributing to the construction of a humane, peaceful, and prosperous society.



The Buddhist flag made of the largest lanterns in Vietnam at Phap Hoa Pagoda, Dak Nong Province, has been honored with a Guinness World Record certificate. Photo: Nguyen Cong Ly



The largest international peace ceremony. Photo: Kỷ lục Việt Nam

In May 2014, the United Nations Vesak Celebration, held at the Bai Dinh International Conference Center in Ninh Binh, marked a historic milestone with the recognition of six national records by the Vietnam Records Organization. This event not only played a significant role in the global Buddhist community but also served as a powerful platform for Vietnam to promote its cultural and spiritual heritage on the international stage.

Largest International Peace Prayer Altar in Vietnam

The "International Peace Prayer - National

Prosperity" altar at the 2014 Vesak Celebration was a groundbreaking spiritual event in Vietnam. The altar was designed to reflect three pivotal events in the life of the Buddha: his birth, enlightenment, and parinirvana. Seamlessly blending traditional Vietnamese Buddhist culture, the altar conveyed messages of peace and harmony, aligning with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals of world peace, sustainable education, and environmental preservation. With representatives from over 95 countries and territories, the event fostered a deep sense of unity and international cooperation.



SIX REMARKABLE RECORDS AT THE 2014 UNITED NATIONS VESAK **CELEBRATION** INNINHBINH



The largest Buddhist painting in Vietnam. Photo: Kỷ lục Việt Nam

Vietnam's Largest Buddhist-themed Painting

The painting titled "Compassionate Fire," spanning an impressive 10 meters by 2 meters, made a lasting impact at Vesak 2014. Created by 10 talented artists, the work symbolizes Buddhist compassion and wisdom. Most notably, Venerable Thich Nhat Tu supervised and advised the creation of this monumental piece, ensuring it embodied the true spirit of Buddhist art. International delegates signed the painting as a gesture of solidarity and mutual respect.

Largest Buddhist Cultural Performance

The "Lotus Heart in the Buddha's Embrace" cultural performance was a highlight of Vesak 2014, featuring more than 160 meticulously choreographed acts. The grand event brought together not only Vietnam's top artists but also performing groups from Thailand, India, and Cambodia. Each performance was a vibrant artistic representation of Buddhist values, delivering messages of peace and compassion to thousands of attendees, both local and international.

 Largest Floating Lantern Offering in Vietnam Vesak 2014 created a mystical scene with the



The largest Buddhist cultural performance. Photo: Ky luc Viet Nam

release of 25,580 floating lanterns dedicated to the Buddha. These lanterns, symbolizing the Buddhist calendar year 2558, were released on the sacred

between the lake Thich Ca Pagoda and Quan Am Pagoda. The floating lanterns provided an ethereal experience, as prayers for world peace and national prosperity were offered in a serene, spiritual atmosphere.

• First and Largest Film **Buddhist** Festival in Vietnam

For the first time in Vietnam, a Buddhist film festival of international scale was held, featuring 120 films from 47 countries. This remarkable event was co-organized Venerable by

director Navin, both whom are highly respected in the world of Buddhist cinema. The films primarily focused on the life and teachings of the Buddha, offering profound messages compassion, equality, and loving-kindness. The festival also provided opportunity unique cultural exchange, attracting notable actors directors and from Bollywood and the global film industry.

Largest Welcome Couplet Display

One of the most striking visuals of Vesak 2014 was the enormous welcoming couplet, measuring 350 square

meters, which was displayed on the cliffs of Hanh Thien Mountain in Ninh Binh. The couplet, 100 meters long, extended a warm welcome to



Thich Nhat Tu and Actor Gagan receives the record for the "Largest Buddhist Film Festival in Vietnam." Photo: Ky luc Viet Nam

international delegates attending this global Buddhist celebration. It stood as a symbol of Vietnam's hospitality, deep affection, and respect for its international guests.

• A Historic Event with Lasting Records

The 2014 Vesak Celebration in Ninh Binh not only reinforced Vietnam's role in the global Buddhist community but also set a precedent with its record-breaking achievements. These significant milestones underscored the event's contribution to spreading Buddhist values and Vietnamese culture on the world stage.

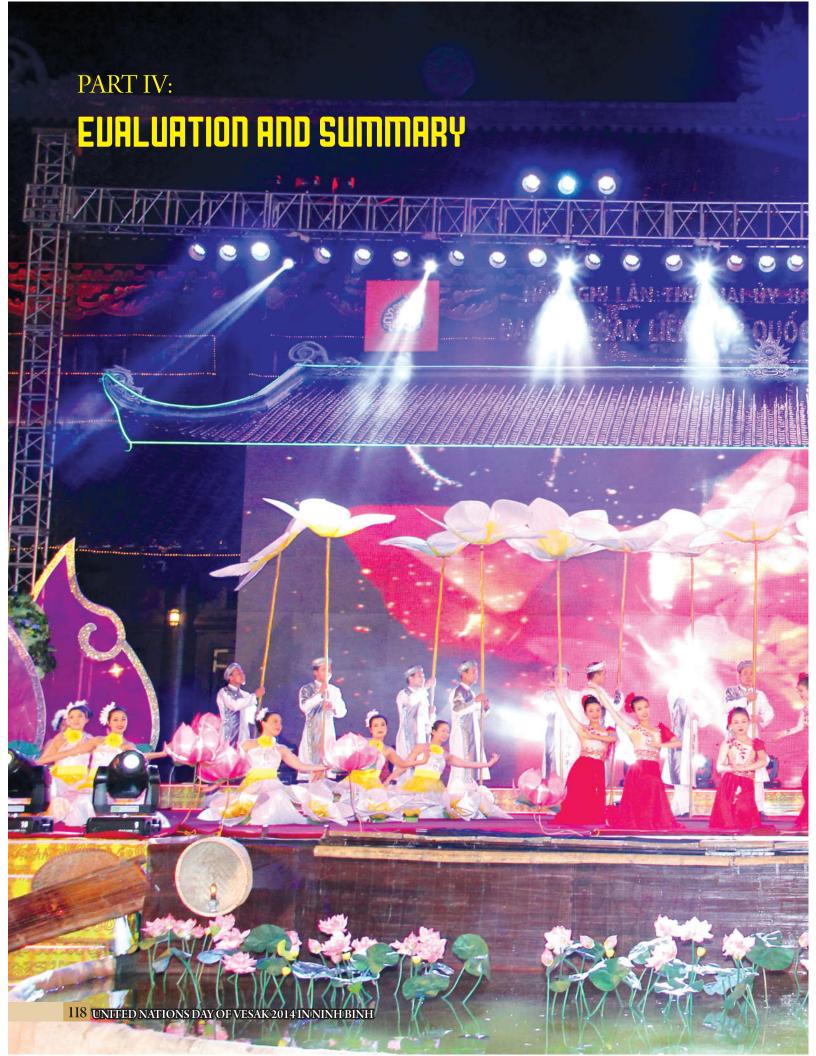


The largest welcoming arch in Vietnam. Photo: Ky luc Viet Nam











UNITED NATIONS DAY OF VESAK 2014:

A LANDMARK OF PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM

Buddhist performance at the UN Vesak Closing Ceremony 2014. Photo: Quang Dai



The United Nations Day of Vesak 2014, held from May 7 to May 10 at Bai Dinh Pagoda, Ninh Binh Province, attracted the participation of 1,500 Buddhist leaders, heads of state, and delegates from nearly 100 countries, along with approximately 10,000 Buddhists and international guests. This was the second time Vietnam hosted Vesak, following the successful event in 2008, further affirming the significant role of Vietnamese Buddhism in the international community.



• Theme of Vesak 2014: Contribution to the Millennium Development Goals

With the theme "Buddhism's Contribution to Achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals," Vesak 2014 not only focused on spiritual values but also addressed issues of sustainable development, peace, and social justice. This event provided an opportunity for Vietnamese and global Buddhism to collectively promote a humanitarian message for a harmonious and happy world.

A Major Event Featuring Key Conferences and Speeches

The celebration included numerous speeches from Buddhist leaders, heads of state, and representatives of international organizations. Messages from United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, and many Buddhist leaders worldwide emphasized the role of Buddhism in addressing global challenges. Additionally, five academic on sustainable development, conferences environmental protection, healthy living, peace, and education were held, clarifying Buddhism's responsibilities in tackling pressing global issues.

Cultural and Spiritual Highlights

Alongside the conferences, Vesak 2014 featured various impressive cultural and spiritual activities, such as the Buddha Bathing Ceremony, international art performances, and candle-lit prayers for peace. Notably, a grand floral parade from Ninh Binh City to Bai Dinh Pagoda became a vibrant highlight, attracting significant public attention.

• Bai Dinh Pagoda - A Symbol of Culture and Spirituality

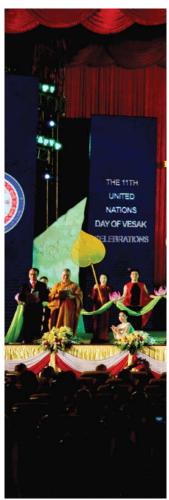
Bai Dinh Pagoda, holding multiple regional and national records, was chosen as the main venue for Vesak 2014. After more than a year of preparation, the event was successfully held in the sacred space of the Trang An complex, recognized by UNESCO as a World Cultural and Natural Heritage site. This occasion served as a special opportunity to showcase Vietnamese Buddhism and the country's spiritual tourism potential.

Connecting Vietnamese Buddhism with the **Global Community**

Vesak 2014 created a bridge between Vietnamese Buddhism and the world, offering a valuable platform for monastics and lay Buddhists to exchange experiences and insights in Buddhist practice. This event not only reaffirmed Vietnam's role in the international Buddhist community but also marked a significant step in advancing the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals.









Outstanding performances at the Closing Ceremony of the UN Vesak 2014. Photo: Ngo Dung





A theatrical depiction of the Buddha's Parinirvana at the Closing Ceremony of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014.







THE 2014 UNITED NATIONS DAY OF VESAK:



Photo: Ngo Dung

• Morning of May 8, 2014: A Grand Beginning

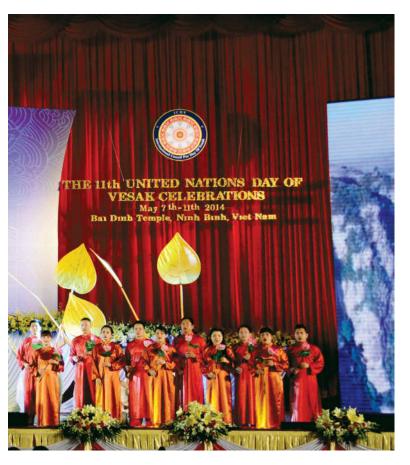
At 8:30 a.m. today, the 2014 United Nations Day of Vesak officially commenced at the Bai International Convention Dinh Center in Ninh Binh. Under the theme "Buddhism's Contribution to Achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals," this event not only marks a significant occasion in the Buddhist calendar but also serves as a key opportunity for Vietnam to assert its active role on the international stage. The event, running from May 8 to May 10, 2014, has been approved by the Prime Minister of Vietnam and the International Organizing Committee.



Chairman of the National Assembly Nguyen Sinh Hung. Photo: Ngo Dung

Presence of International Leaders and Delegates

The 2014 Vesak celebration attracted more than 1,000 delegates from 95 countries and territories. High-ranking Vietnamese officials, including



Vesak 2014 Organizing Committee, emphasized the role of Buddhism in addressing global challenges such as poverty, illiteracy, violence, and conflict. He affirmed that Buddhism, with its values of compassion, tolerance, and non-violence, can contribute to building a peaceful and sustainable world—values that Vesak 2014 aims to spread.

Speech by National Assembly Chairman Nguyen Sinh Hung: Vietnam's Vision for Global Integration

In his address, National Assembly Chairman Nguyen Sinh Hung highlighted that Vesak 2014 is a testament to Vietnam's commitment to promoting religious and global peace. He stressed that the event not only celebrates the noble values of Buddhism but also reflects Vietnam's dedication to peace, cooperation, and development. The success of Vesak 2008 and Vesak 2014 further demonstrates Vietnam's stature and responsibility in the international community.

Messages from International Leaders

At the ceremony, Most Venerable Thich Duc Nghiep read the message from the Supreme Patriarch of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha. Most Venerable Thich Chon Thien delivered the welcoming address on behalf of the Executive Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha. Representing UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Ms. Pratibha Mehata, UN Resident Coordinator in Hanoi, extended her congratulations, affirming that the spirit of Buddhism aligns with the humanistic and peaceful values upheld by the UN.

National Assembly Chairman Nguyen Sinh Hung and President of the Vietnam Fatherland Front Nguyen Thien Nhan, were also along with several present, former leaders of the Party and State. Sri Lankan Prime Minister Javaratne and members of royal families from various countries also attended, reflecting their deep commitment to this event. The presence of professors, scholars, and Buddhist leaders from around the globe underscored the importance of Vesak 2014.

Buddhism and the United Nations Millennium **Development Goals**

During opening ceremony, Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu, Chairman of the



His Holiness Thich Duc Nghiep. Photo: Ngo Dung



Former Chairman of the Lao Buddhist Sangha. Photo: Ngo Dung

The Buddha Bathing Ceremony and Dove Release: A Symbol of Peace

Following the speeches, the event continued with sacred rituals, including the Buddha Bathing Ceremony at Thich Ca Hall, symbolizing reverence for the Buddha and the purification of the soul. The release of doves and balloons for peace was another highlight of the event, reflecting a global desire for a world free from conflict and violence.

Floral Float Parade: Honoring Buddhist Culture

In celebration of Vesak 2014, a grand float parade was organized, starting from Ninh Binh City and proceeding to Bai Dinh Pagoda. This was the largest float procession ever held in Ninh Binh, featuring 30 floats adorned with fresh flowers, accompanied by 200 support vehicles. The parade was a beautiful and sacred tribute to Buddhist culture, expressing deep gratitude for the teachings of the Buddha.

Panorama Exhibition: Discovering the Beauty of Ninh Binh's Culture and Nature

Another key highlight of Vesak 2014 was the Panorama Exhibition, showcasing 135 artistic

photographs under the theme "Scenic Ninh Binh." This exhibition attracted thousands of visitors, offering a comprehensive view of the natural and cultural beauty of the Ninh Binh region.

Vesak 2014: A Platform to Promote Vietnam on the Global Stage

The 2014 United Nations Day of Vesak was not only a significant religious event but also an opportunity for Vietnam to assert its position in the context of international integration. The event helped to promote the image of Vietnam as a peaceful and hospitable nation, while also enhancing its comprehensive cooperation with countries worldwide.

Conclusion: A Lasting Legacy of Vesak 2014

The opening program of Vesak 2014 was conducted in a solemn atmosphere, leaving a deep impression on delegates and international visitors. Vesak 2014 was not only the world's largest cultural Buddhist event but also a milestone in linking Buddhism with global development goals, paving the way for a peaceful and sustainable future.



Photo: TTXVN









The flower parade at the main gate of Bai Dinh Pagoda. Photo: Ngo Dung









Diverse flower arrangements welcome the UN Vesak 2014.

















Overview of the summary report session. Photo: Ngo Dung

SUMMARY OF VESAK 2014: SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL EVENT IN VIETNAM

On the afternoon of June 28, 2014, at Quang Duc Zen Monastery in Ho Chi Minh City, the Executive Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (GHPGVN) held a ceremony to summarize the organization of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2014 (UN Vesak 2014) as part of its mid-year review conference. The event was attended by numerous Buddhist dignitaries, leaders, and representatives of various state agencies.

A Grand Event with the Presence of High-Level Leaders

The ceremony was attended and presided over by prominent dignitaries including Most Venerable Thich Duc Nghiep, Most Venerable Thich Giac Nhuong (both Vice Chairmen of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha's Standing Council), Most Venerable Thich Vien Giac, Most Venerable Thich Giac Tuong, Most Venerable Thich Chon Thien, Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu (both Vice Chairmen of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha), and

His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon (Permanent Vice Chairman and General Secretary of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha), along with other dignitaries from central Buddhist institutions. Also in attendance were Mr. Bui Thanh Ha, Deputy Director of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs, and Mr. Bui Huu Duoc, Director of the Buddhist Affairs Department.

The Success of Vesak 2014: A Remarkable **International Event**

In the report presented by Thich Duc Thien, Vice General Secretary of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and General Secretary of the Vesak 2014 Organizing Committee, the event held at Bai Dinh Pagoda, Ninh Binh from May 7-11, 2014 was hailed as a resounding success. The event attracted 1,132 international delegates from 95 countries and territories, alongside domestic participants, including thousands of monks, nuns, and over 20,000 Vietnamese Buddhists, as well as 4.350 volunteers.



Venerable Thich Duc Thien presented the Summary Report. Photo: Giac Ngo Newspaper.

Organization Cultural Impressive and Significance of Vietnamese Buddhism

The decoration of the main stage at Bai Dinh was highly praised for its aesthetic value and cultural symbolism, highlighting Vietnam's rich cultural heritage. The event received significant support from the Party, Government, and various ministries, elevating it into a key diplomatic event for the nation. Vesak 2014 was not only a religious event but also an opportunity for Vietnam to showcase its peaceful, hospitable image on the global stage.

• Global Buddhist Dialogue: Scientific and **Cultural Forums**

Vesak 2014 focused on the theme "Buddhism's Contribution to Achieving the UN Millennium

Development Goals." Several scientific forums took place, bringing together and renowned Buddhist scholars researchers from around the world. In total, 320 scholarly papers were submitted, with 150 papers selected for discussion and publication as part of the event proceedings. The forums contributed significantly to addressing global issues such as sustainable development, environmental protection, and peacebuilding.

• Cultural and Spiritual Activities: Profound and Meaningful

Besides the academic sessions, Vesak 2014 featured many spiritual and cultural activities, including the traditional Buddha bathing ceremony, peace prayers for world, a candlelight vigil for the East Sea, and several outstanding artistic

performances. These activities left a deep impression on participants and underscored the rich spiritual and cultural diversity of Buddhism.

Recognition of Outstanding Contributions

During the ceremony, many prominent figures and individuals were awarded Certificates of Merit by the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha for their significant contributions to the success of Vesak 2014. Notable individuals included His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon, who played a pivotal role in organizing and leading the event, and Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu, Chairman of the Vesak 2014 Organizing Committee, whose leadership was key to the event's success. Thich Duc Thien, General Secretary of the Vesak Organizing Committee, was also commended for his tireless efforts in coordinating the event. Additionally, Most Venerable Thich Thanh Phong, Thich Nhat Tu, and Thich Tho Lac were recognized for their exceptional contributions to promoting Buddhist cultural values.

Conclusion: Vesak 2014 – A Milestone in the **Development of Vietnamese Buddhism**

At the closing ceremony, Buddhist leaders expressed deep gratitude to the Party, Government, and various agencies for their support, which contributed to the success of Vesak 2014. The Vietnam Buddhist Sangha also commended and honored the outstanding individuals and groups who contributed to the event's success. Vesak 2014 stands as a clear testament to the important role of Buddhism in society and solidifies Vietnam's position on the global Buddhist stage.



HT. Thich Thien Nhon presents the Certificate of Merit from the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha. Photo: Ngo Dung



