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PHẬT ĐẢN
LIÊN HỢP QUỐC
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♦ A Milestone of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019 in Vietnam

The United Nations Day of Vesak (UNDV) 2019 in Vietnam, held from May 12 to 14 at Tam Chuc Temple in Ha Nam, marked a significant milestone in the internationalization of Vietnamese Buddhism. With the theme *Buddhist Approach to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Sustainable Societies*, the UNDV 2019 was a resounding success, not only as the third time Vietnam hosted the event but also as the largest-scale Vesak celebration ever. The sub-themes of UNDV 2019 were thoroughly discussed in conference sessions, including *Buddhism and Sustainable Societies*, *Mindful and Compassionate Leadership for Global Peace*, and *Buddhist Responsibility towards Family, Healthcare, and Sustainable Societies in the Contemporary World*. These topics were deliberated by hundreds of scholars, Buddhist leaders, and international delegates to seek peaceful solutions and sustainable development for humanity.

♦ Structure and Main Content of the Book on UN Vesak Vietnam 2019

The book *UN Vesak Vietnam Day 2019 in Vietnam: Buddhist Values and Global Responsibilities* consists of four main sections, encompassing numerous chapters that provide a detailed overview of the organizational process, major events, cultural activities, and academic conferences of UNDV 2019.

Part I: Preparing for a Global-Scale Event: UN Vesak Vietnam 2019 describes the preparation work, from infrastructure construction and ceremonial arrangements to international coordination between the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) and various governmental agencies.

Part II: UN Vesak Vietnam 2019: Key Events and Messages of Peace highlights the opening and closing ceremonies, international forums, and significant speeches.

Part III: Buddhist Culture at UN Vesak Vietnam 2019: Honoring and Spreading Buddhist Values documents major cultural activities, from lantern festivals to Buddhist heritage exhibitions.

Part IV: Academic Conference on UN Vesak Vietnam 2019: New Perspectives on Buddhism and Society compiles academic papers from delegates worldwide.

♦ Participation of Vietnamese and International Leaders

During the UNDV 2019 event, the Organizing Committee was honored to welcome numerous Vietnamese state leaders, reaffirming the nation's significant role in hosting this global Buddhist event. The distinguished attendees included Nguyễn Phú Trọng, General Secretary and President of Vietnam;

Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister; Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, Chairwoman of the National Assembly, who hosted the official banquet for delegation leaders; Truong Hoa Binh, Permanent Deputy Prime Minister, who delivered a speech at the Closing Ceremony; and Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, who spoke at the Opening Ceremony. Additionally, Nguyen Sinh Hung and Truong Tan Sang, former Chairman of the National Assembly and former President, respectively, actively participated in various key events, demonstrating strong support from Vietnam's leadership.

♦ **Participation of International Heads of State and Leaders**

UNDV 2019 was not only a celebration of Buddhism but also an opportunity for high-level diplomatic engagement among international leaders, reinforcing the global significance of the event. Distinguished guests included Win Myint, President of Myanmar; Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, Prime Minister of Nepal; Venkaiah Naidu, Vice President of India; and Tashi Dorji, Chairman of Bhutan's National Council. Furthermore, numerous ambassadors and leaders of global Buddhist organizations were present, contributing to key discussions and ceremonial activities, enriching the depth and diversity of UN Vesak Vietnam 2019.

♦ **The Role of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and Governmental Support**

Under the leadership of Supreme Patriarch Thich Pho Tue, Deputy Supreme Patriarch Thich Tri Quang, and Chairman of the Executive Council His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha played a pioneering role in internationalizing the Vesak event. Standing Vice Presidents of the Executive Council, such as Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu and Most Venerable Thich Thien Phap, along with Vice President and General Secretary Most Venerable Thich Duc Thien, ensured seamless coordination throughout the entire organizational process, guaranteeing the success of UNDV 2019.

The success of UN Vesak Vietnam 2019 would not have been possible without the strong support of the Vietnamese government and the Ha Nam Provincial People's Committee. Particularly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Information and Communications, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Health, the Government Committee for Religious Affairs, and other central agencies closely collaborated to orchestrate this internationally significant event. The Ha Nam Provincial People's Committee and

its various departments made exceptional efforts in infrastructure development and logistical support, ensuring the smooth execution of the grand Vesak celebration.

♦ **Significant Achievements in Organizing the UN Vesak Vietnam Celebrations**

With the 2008 UN Vesak Vietnam attracting 87 countries and the 2014 Vesak welcoming 95 countries, Vietnam made an even greater mark with the 2019 event, elevating Vesak to the largest international Buddhist gathering ever organized. From international conferences and peace prayers to cultural events, lantern festivals, photo exhibitions, and Buddhist tribute activities, every aspect of the event was meticulously planned and executed at an unparalleled scale and quality.

UNDV 2019 was not merely a religious event but also a symbol of culture, peace, and international solidarity. Both the opening and closing ceremonies were broadcast live on major national media channels and aired in multiple countries worldwide.

With hundreds of media agencies, newspapers, and television channels covering the event, UNDV 2019 achieved an unprecedented level of media presence, unmatched by any other international Buddhist gathering.

♦ **Opportunities to Contribute to UN Vesak Vietnam Celebrations**

Through various UN Vesak Vietnam celebrations held domestically and internationally, I have had the honor of playing a pivotal role in bringing the UN Day of Vesak 2008 to Vietnam as the Secretary-General. I continued to serve as Deputy Secretary-General of the UN Day of Vesak celebrations in Bangkok (2006, 2007), Vietnam (2014, 2019), and as Vice Chairman of the National Vesak Committee for 2025. I am deeply grateful for the trust bestowed upon me by the leadership of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS), as demonstrated by the immense responsibilities entrusted to me—from inviting international delegations to expanding the scale and participation of Buddhist organizations worldwide.

I also had the privilege of serving as the Chief Coordinator of the International Conference and overseeing parts of the exhibitions and cultural performances—key elements that contributed to the resounding success of UNDV 2019.

Through collaboration with delegation leaders and international Buddhist leaders, I have gained invaluable experience in event planning, cultural coordination, academic conferences, and Buddhist ceremonies.

This book is not only a cherished personal memoir but also a comprehensive guide to

organizing international Buddhist events. It serves as a valuable resource for future generations in planning UN Day of Vesak celebrations and large-scale Buddhist events on the global stage.

I take immense pride in contributing ideas and realizing record-breaking initiatives in Vietnam, helping make UNDV 2019 the most successful Vesak to date. This includes the publication of 32 works—16 in Vietnamese and 16 in English—curated under my editorial leadership and distributed during the event.

This book stands as both a testament to the remarkable success of UN Vesak Vietnam 2019 and a heartfelt tribute to all those who directly and indirectly contributed to its achievements. Thanks to the unwavering support of the Vietnamese Government, the Ha Nam Provincial People's Committee, and the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, UNDV 2019 became a beacon of connectivity, celebrating the Buddhist spirit of peace, compassion, and wisdom on an international scale. It is also a testament to Vietnam's commitment to the globalization of Buddhism and serves as an inspiration for future generations to uphold and advance Buddhist values for the peace and sustainable development of humanity.

October 12, 2023

Most Ven. Thich Nhat Tu

Standing Executive Member of National Vietnam

Buddhist Sangha (VBS);

Vice President, VBS Hồ Chí Minh City;

Standing Vice Rector, Vietnam Buddhist University;

Vice Chairman, National Vesak Committee for UN

Vesak Vietnam 2025;

Convener, UN Vesak Vietnam 2025 Conference.

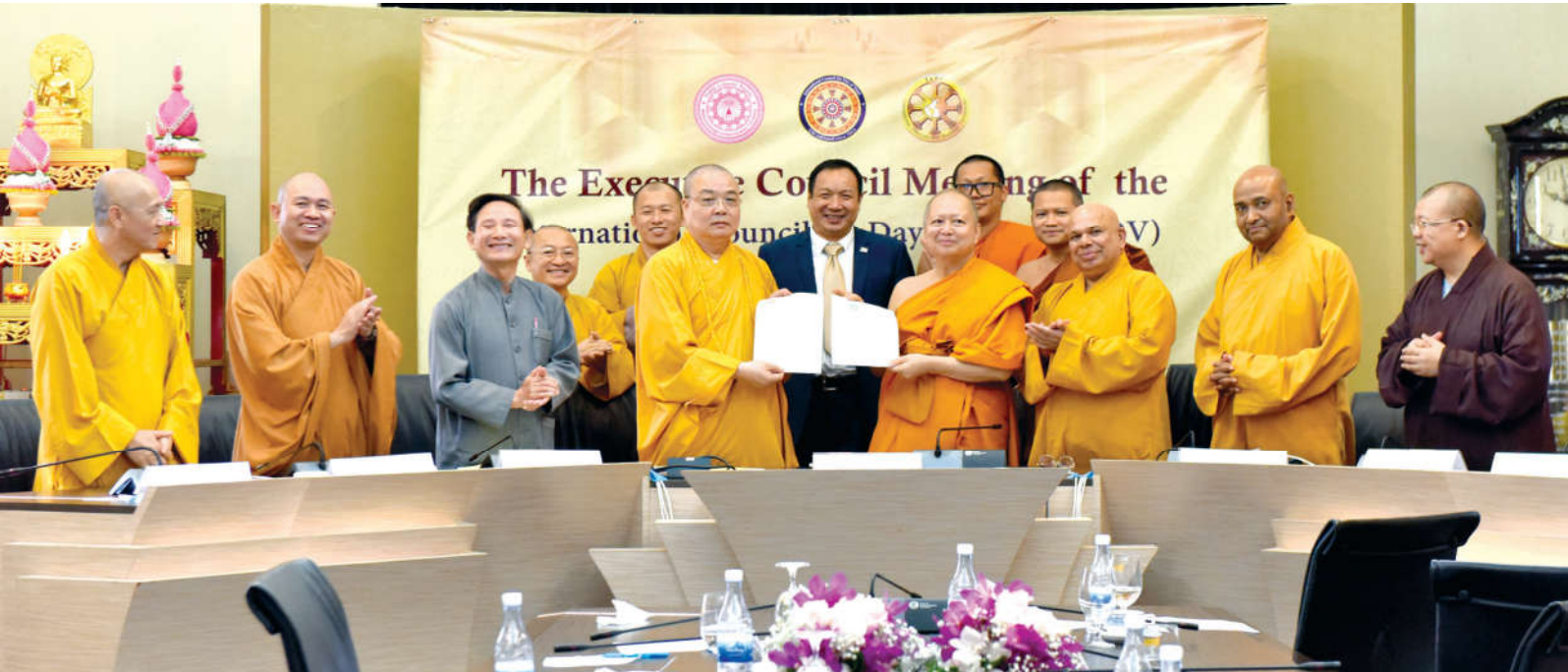
PART I:

PREPARATION FOR UN VESAK 2019





The United Nations Day of Vesak 2019 Conference Hall at Tam Chuc Pagoda, Ha Nam



Handover Ceremony of the Hosting Rights for the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019 to the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.
 Photo: Ngo Dung

VIETNAM OFFICIALLY GRANTED THE HOSTING RIGHTS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS DAY OF VESAK 2019

On the afternoon of September 22, 2018, during the expanded session of the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV) in Thailand, a significant decision was made: the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (GHPGVN) was officially granted the right to host the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019. The meeting, held at the Rector's Office of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU) in Wang Noi, Ayutthaya, was chaired by Most Venerable Prof. Dr. Phra Brahmapundit, President of ICDV, with the co-chair being Most Venerable Prof. Dr. Phra Rajapariyattkavi, Rector of MCU and Secretary-General of ICDV, along with several high-ranking members of the Council.

♦ Vietnamese Delegation Takes on a Great Responsibility

The Vietnamese delegation, led by Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu, Permanent Vice President of the Executive Council (HĐTS), included prominent figures such as Most Venerable Thich Duc Thien, Vice President and Secretary-General of HĐTS; Most Venerable Thich Nhat Tu, Deputy Head of the Central Committee for International Buddhist Affairs; and other distinguished members of the Central Committee for International Buddhist Affairs. Notably, Prof. Dr. Le Manh That, Vice-Rector of the Vietnam Buddhist University, HCM City and a key figure of GHPGVN within the ICDV, was also present at the session.

Following lively discussions, the ICDV formally transferred the hosting rights for the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019 to Vietnam through official document number ICDV/024 dated September 22, 2018. This decision,



addressed to His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon, President of the Executive Council, confirmed that the 16th United Nations Day of Vesak will take place from May 12 to 14, 2019, in Ha Nam Province.

♦ **Theme and Goals of Vesak 2019**

The primary theme of the 2019 Vesak celebrations has been defined as “*Buddhist Approach to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Sustainable Societies*.” This event will not only serve as a crucial cultural and religious gathering but will also provide a platform for leaders, scholars, and the international community to engage in discussions and share solutions for a sustainable global society. Further sub-themes will be discussed at the next ICDV conference, scheduled to be held in Vietnam on October 11 and 12.

♦ **Preparations for Vesak in Vietnam**

Most Venerable President of the Executive Council confirmed that the Vietnamese government

has approved the GHPGVN’s hosting of the event in principle. The official venue will be the Tam Chuc Buddhist Cultural Center in Ha Nam Province. As of now, approximately 80% of the necessary infrastructure preparations have been completed to ensure the successful execution of the event. The Secretariat of the Executive Council and related committees are expediting the detailed planning process, which is expected to be submitted for approval at the year-end review meeting of Buddhist affairs in 2018.

This will mark the third time Vietnam has hosted the United Nations Day of Vesak, following successful events in 2008 and 2014. With the experience gained from these past events, GHPGVN is committed to ensuring meticulous preparations, promising a grand and successful celebration that will further elevate Vietnam’s standing in the international community.



Overview of the Hosting Rights Handover Meeting. Photo: Ngo Dung

UNITED NATIONS VESAK DAY 2019: A GLOBAL SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL EVENT IN VIETNAM



The United Nations Vesak Day 2019, held for the third time in Vietnam, attracted significant international attention and was recognized as an important global cultural and spiritual event. Taking place at the Tam Chuc Tourist Complex in Ha Nam from May 12 to 14, 2019, the event welcomed 1,500 international delegates from over 100 countries and territories, alongside around 10,000 Buddhists each day. This occasion provided Vietnam with a valuable opportunity to showcase its Buddhist culture and affirm the important role of Vietnamese Buddhism in the nation's development and progress.

♦ Origins and Meaning of United Nations Vesak Day

Vesak Day, also known as the “Triple Sacred Day,” celebrates three key events in the life of Buddha Shakyamuni: His birth, enlightenment, and passing into nirvana. This event has long been celebrated in Theravada Buddhist countries such as Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia.

On December 15, 1999, at the 54th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Vesak Day was officially recognized as an international event. The General Assembly decided that Vesak would be held annually on the full moon day of May, beginning in 2000. Since then, Vesak Day has been celebrated at the UN headquarters in New York and various UN regional offices worldwide, with participation from Buddhists in numerous countries.

Since 2004, Vesak Day has been regularly hosted in Thailand under the patronage of the Thai Royal Government and the Thai Sangha Council. It was also hosted in Sri Lanka in 2016. Vesak is not only an opportunity for the global Buddhist community to honor Buddha but also to spread the message of peace, compassion, wisdom, and non-violence.

♦ Vietnam: Hosting Vesak for the Third Time

Vietnam has twice hosted United Nations Vesak Day—first in 2008 and again in 2014. On both occasions, Vietnam left a lasting impression on international friends through its careful organization, reflecting the Buddhist spirit of compassion and harmony. The third hosting of Vesak Day in 2019 further affirms the alignment of Buddhism with the nation's historical role in building and defending the country.

With the theme “*Buddhist Approach to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibility for Sustainable Societies*,” Vesak 2019 sparked discussions on how Buddhism can contribute to addressing global issues such as climate change, healthcare, ethical education, and sustainable development.

♦ Meticulous Planning and Organization

The Tam Chuc Tourist Complex, the venue for Vesak 2019, is one of the largest spiritual tourist destinations in the world, spanning 1,087.17 hectares. Important structures such as the Tam The Hall, Phap Chu Hall, Ngoc Pagoda, and Thuy Dinh were completed, creating a sacred space befitting an international event like Vesak.

In terms of organization, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) worked in collaboration with the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV) to establish an International Organizing Committee comprising 51 members. The VBS Organizing Committee included 68 members, chaired by Most Venerable Thich Thien Nhon. Additionally, the Vietnamese government formed an inter-ministerial task force to support and ensure the success of the event.

♦ Program and Content of Vesak 2019

During Vesak 2019, in addition to the opening and closing ceremonies, five international workshops were held on topics related to education, healthcare, peace, and sustainable development. These forums attracted the attention and contributions of many scholars and Buddhist leaders from around the

world. Alongside these, cultural, artistic, and exhibition activities showcased the essence of Buddhist culture and Vietnamese traditions.

At the conclusion of the event, the Vesak 2019 Declaration was adopted, reflecting the delegates' consensus on shared responsibility in building a sustainable society, grounded in the Buddhist values of compassion and wisdom.

♦ A Global Event: The Contribution of Vietnamese Buddhism

Vesak 2019 was not only an opportunity for Vietnamese Buddhism to affirm its role on the international stage but also a chance to promote the image of Vietnam and its people to the world. This event transcended religious boundaries, contributing to cultural exchange, international cooperation, and reaffirming the alignment of Buddhism with the development of Vietnamese society.

The successful organization of United Nations Vesak Day 2019 once again highlighted Vietnam's importance within the global Buddhist community, clearly demonstrating the leadership and vision of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in promoting peace, cooperation, and sustainable development for all humanity.



Seven Lotus Flowers in Lake in front of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019 Conference Hall. Photo: Ngo Dung



Presidium of the First Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019 in Ha Nam.

Photo: Buddhism in Ha Nam

FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS VESAK CELEBRATION 2019 IN VIETNAM

On the morning of October 11, 2018, at Crowne Plaza Hotel (My Dinh, Tu Liem, Hanoi), the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS), in collaboration with the Government Committee for Religious Affairs and the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV), held the first preparatory meeting for the United Nations Vesak Celebration 2019. This meeting marked an important step in the preparation for one of the most significant global Buddhist events, which is expected to take place at Tam Chuc Pagoda, Ha Nam Province.

♦ Delegates and Goals of the Meeting

The meeting witnessed the participation and guidance of many respected monks such as Most Venerable Thich Tri Quang, Deputy Patriarch of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha's Council of Elders; Most Venerable Thich Thien Nhon, President of the VBS's Executive Council; and Most Venerable Prof. Dr. Phra Brahmapundit, President of the ICDV. Government representatives, including Mr. Tran Tan Hung, Deputy Head of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs, and officials from various ministries and localities, were also present. Notably,

the meeting brought together international delegates from countries such as Thailand, India, China, Japan, the United States, France, and several others.

In his opening remarks, Most Venerable Thich Thien Nhon warmly welcomed the delegates and emphasized the significance of hosting Vesak 2019. Under the theme “*Buddhist Approach to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Sustainable Societies*,” Vesak 2019 presents an opportunity not only to spread the Buddha’s message of compassion and wisdom but also to promote dialogue and international cooperation for sustainable development.

♦ The Significance of United Nations Vesak

At a press conference held on the same day, Most Venerable Prof. Dr. Phra Brahmapundit shared that since Vietnam began hosting Vesak, the United Nations has recognized the crucial role of Buddhism in contributing to global socio-economic goals. Since 2013, ICDV has been officially acknowledged as an organization under the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Vesak has evolved from being a regional Buddhist celebration in Thailand to becoming a significant international event, serving as a bridge between religions and global communities.

♦ Strong Support from the Vietnamese Government

In his speech, Mr. Tran Tan Hung affirmed the Vietnamese government’s full support for the Vesak 2019 Celebration. He highlighted Vietnam’s active participation as a member of the United Nations and its respect for religious freedom. The government pledged to provide maximum support to the VBS in organizing this event while cooperating with international organizations to ensure its success. Mr. Hung also called upon the ICDV to guide the VBS in aligning the Vesak themes with the broader development goals of the United Nations.

♦ Preparations for Vesak 2019

During the meeting, delegates discussed the main content and sub-themes of Vesak 2019. The event is expected to welcome around 10,000 participants, including 1,500 Buddhist dignitaries, scholars, and leaders from over 100 countries and territories. Presentations and discussions will focus on crucial topics such as the role of Buddhism in global leadership, environmental responsibility, and sustainable social

development.

♦ Expectations for Vesak 2019 in Vietnam

With the successful organization of the United Nations Vesak Celebrations in 2008 and 2014, Vietnam continues to earn the trust of the global Buddhist community. These previous celebrations left a strong impression with the participation of numerous international delegates, and Vesak 2019 is anticipated to be another milestone in international cooperation, further affirming Vietnam’s position in the global Buddhist landscape.

Vesak 2019 is not only a religious event but also an opportunity for Vietnam to showcase its culture, people, and heritage. The celebration will serve as a spiritual bridge between nations, carrying a message of peace, compassion, and shared responsibility in building a sustainable society.



Overview of the First Preparatory Meeting.

Photo: Ha Nam Buddhist Sangha

PRESS CONFERENCE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS DAY OF VESAK 2019 IN VIETNAM: AFFIRMING THE ROLE OF BUDDHISM AND PROMOTING VIETNAM'S IMAGE



His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon, Chairman of the Executive Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, delivering the opening speech at the press conference. *Photo: thiduakhenthuongvn.org.vn*

♦ Introduction to the United Nations Day of Vesak and its Importance

On October 11, 2018, in Hanoi, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) held an official press conference regarding the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019, a globally significant religious event celebrating the humanistic, peaceful, and compassionate values of Buddhism. Vesak, also known as the Triple Gem Day, commemorates

three key events in the life of the Buddha: his Birth, Enlightenment, and Passing into Nirvana. In 1999, the United Nations General Assembly officially recognized Vesak as an international day, observed annually at the UN headquarters in New York and its regional offices worldwide.

♦ Vietnam: Host for the Third Time

In 2019, Vietnam will proudly host the United Nations Day of Vesak for the third time, with

organizational support from the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV) and backing from the Government of Vietnam. The event will take place from May 12 to 14, 2019, at the Tam Chuc Buddhist Cultural Center in Ha Nam province. The theme for this year is “*Buddhist Approaches to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibility for Sustainable Societies*,” with numerous forums and scientific conferences focused on fostering dialogue and addressing pressing global issues.

♦ **Scale and International Participation**

The 2019 Vesak celebration is expected to welcome over 10,000 attendees, including 1,500

dignitaries, religious leaders, scholars, and Buddhist practitioners from approximately 90–100 countries and territories. International forums will discuss global challenges through a Buddhist lens, such as responsible leadership, education, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and sustainable consumption.

♦ **Preparatory Meeting and Comprehensive Arrangements**

Ahead of the Vesak celebrations, the first preparatory meeting was held from October 11 – 12, 2018, in Hanoi, with over 100 international



Photo: Ngo Dung

delegates from countries including India, Thailand, Sri Lanka, China, Japan, the United States, France, Norway, and more. This event laid the groundwork to ensure the successful organization of Vesak 2019.

♦ **Vesak: A Cultural Bridge and Message of Peace**

Since the UN General Assembly passed its resolution in 1999, the Vesak festival has been observed annually around the world, offering the global Buddhist community a chance to promote the Buddha's teachings of compassion, peace, and non-violence. The United Nations Day of Vesak is not only a religious celebration but also an opportunity

for countries to engage in dialogue and explore solutions to contemporary global challenges.

♦ **Vesak 2019: Elevating Vietnam's Global Buddhist Role**

Vietnam's hosting of Vesak 2019 underscores the pivotal role of Vietnamese Buddhism in international integration while also demonstrating Vietnam's commitment to the global community and the United Nations. This event will also serve as a platform to showcase the rich culture, people, and traditions of Vietnam, further strengthening the country's global standing during this era of international integration.



THE SECOND PREPARATORY CONFERENCE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS VESAK CELEBRATION 2019 IN VIETNAM



Permanent Members of ICDV and Leaders of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha. Photo: Ngo Dung

On January 25, 2019, at Bai Dinh Pagoda in Ninh Binh Province, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (GHPGVN), in collaboration with the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV), held the second preparatory conference for the United Nations Vesak Celebration 2019. The conference saw the attendance of senior monks, government officials, and international representatives, reaffirming the commitment to make Vesak 2019 a significant global event with a profound religious, political, and cultural impact.

♦ Vesak – A Global Buddhist Event

In his opening remarks, Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu, Vice President of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha's Executive Council, emphasized that Vesak is not only a commemoration of the three major events in the life of the Buddha—his birth, enlightenment, and passing into Nirvana—but also an opportunity for Vietnam to affirm its international standing and responsibility. It is a great honor for the GHPGVN to be entrusted for the third time

by ICDV to host the UN Vesak Celebration at Tam Chuc Pagoda in Ha Nam Province. The theme for Vesak 2019, “*Buddhist Approach to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Sustainable Societies*,” makes the event not only a major religious occasion but also a platform to promote Vietnam's culture and image to the world, boosting tourism and economic growth. It further supports Vietnam's efforts to have UNESCO recognize the scenic complexes of Huong Son, Tam Chuc, Dong Tam, and Van Long as world heritage sites.

♦ Strong Collaboration Between GHPGVN and the Government

During the conference, Mr. Vu Chien Thang, Head of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs, reaffirmed the strong cooperation between the government and GHPGVN in the preparations for Vesak. He confirmed that the infrastructure at Tam Chuc Pagoda was 90% complete and would be ready in time for Vesak 2019. The government and



H.E. Vu Chien Thang – Chairman of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs delivering a speech.
Photo: Ngo Dung

relevant agencies will continue to work closely with GHPGVN to ensure that the event proceeds smoothly, successfully, and according to plan.

♦ **Preparation of Content and Infrastructure for Vesak 2019**

The conference provided an opportunity for members of both the International and National Organizing Committees to discuss and finalize preparations, including the expected participation of over 483 Buddhist organizations from more than 120 countries and territories. The organizing

committee had already received 391 research papers from scholars, professors, and Buddhist researchers worldwide. These papers cover various important topics, such as Buddhist missionary work in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Buddhist ethics on environmental protection, and the intersection between Buddhism and global ethics.

As part of the preparation process, delegates conducted an on-site inspection of the facilities at Tam Chuc Pagoda, the venue for the celebration. Infrastructure such as the Tam Chuc Buddhist Cultural Center is being finalized to accommodate more than 10,000 attendees from around the world.

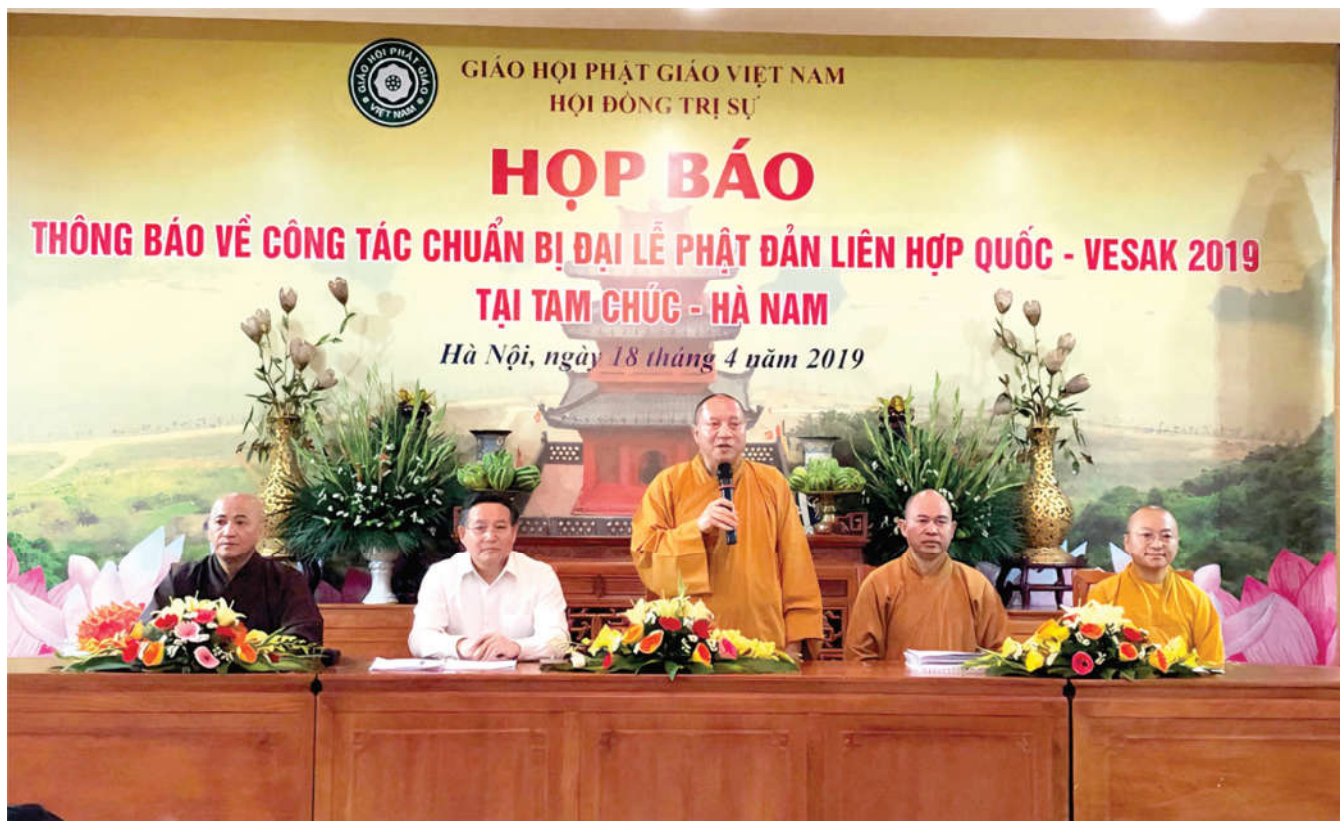
♦ **Vesak 2019 – A Platform for Promoting National Image and Status**

Vesak 2019 is not only a religious event but also an important diplomatic opportunity for Vietnam. With the participation of thousands of Buddhists and international scholars, this event offers a platform for GHPGVN to promote Buddhist teachings while also affirming Vietnam’s commitment to religious freedom and enhancing international cooperation. Additionally, Vesak 2019 will contribute to the promotion of tourism, economic development, and the elevation of Vietnam’s global image.

The second preparatory conference marks a crucial step in the journey towards Vesak 2019, which promises to be a meaningful and successful event, further affirming Vietnam’s role in the global Buddhist community.



Overview of the second preparatory conference. *Photo: Ngo Dung*



Press Conference on the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019. Photo: Ngo Dung

PRESS CONFERENCE ON UNITED NATIONS VESAK 2019: GREAT EXPECTATIONS FOR A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL EVENT

On April 18, 2019, at the headquarters of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) at Quan Su Pagoda, Hanoi, a press conference was held on the upcoming United Nations Day of Vesak 2019. This major international Buddhist event is expected to bring together national leaders and tens of thousands of Buddhist followers from around the world.

♦ Meticulous Preparation for an Important International Event

In his opening remarks, Most Venerable Thich Gia Quang, Vice Chairman of the VBS's Executive Council and Head of the VBS Information and Communication Committee, emphasized that Vesak 2019 is a valuable opportunity for Vietnamese Buddhism to showcase the profound humanitarian

values of Buddhism to the world. Organized under the auspices of the VBS in collaboration with the International Council for Day of Vesak (ICDV) and with support from the Government of Vietnam, the event promises to leave a lasting impression on the international Buddhist community.

♦ Thousands of International Delegates and Religious Leaders to Attend

According to Venerable Thich Duc Thien, Vice Chairman and General Secretary of the VBS, Vesak 2019 is expected to welcome 1,500 international delegates from 105 countries and territories, including high-ranking leaders such as the President of Myanmar, the Prime Minister of Nepal, the Vice President of India, the President of the Bhutanese Senate, and the UN Under-Secretary-General.

Additionally, approximately 20,000 domestic delegates, including government leaders, VBS officials, and Buddhist followers from 63 provinces across Vietnam, will participate in the event.

Diverse Cultural and Spiritual Programs

Vesak 2019 will not only be a platform for discussing significant Buddhist issues in a global context but will also feature a variety of cultural and spiritual activities. These include the Buddha bathing ceremony, the national prayer for peace and prosperity, and a lantern-lighting ceremony for world peace. Artistic performances, such as the “Radiance of Enlightenment” symphony and international cultural exchanges, will take place on the opening night, accompanied by a fireworks display, which will be broadcast live on VTV1.

♦ Global Responsibility and Buddhism in the Modern Era

Under the theme “Buddhist Approaches to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Sustainable Societies,” Vesak 2019 will provide delegates the opportunity to discuss the role of Buddhism in addressing global challenges. Key issues, including education, healthcare, environmental protection, and responsible consumption, will be

addressed in international academic workshops during the event.

♦ Connecting Buddhism with Global Culture and Heritage

Within the Vesak 2019 framework, the organizing committee will also inaugurate an exhibition of World Heritage Buddhist pagodas and Buddhist relics from across the globe. This event provides an opportunity for Buddhists and visitors to admire unique cultural heritage, further connecting Vietnamese Buddhism with global cultural heritage.

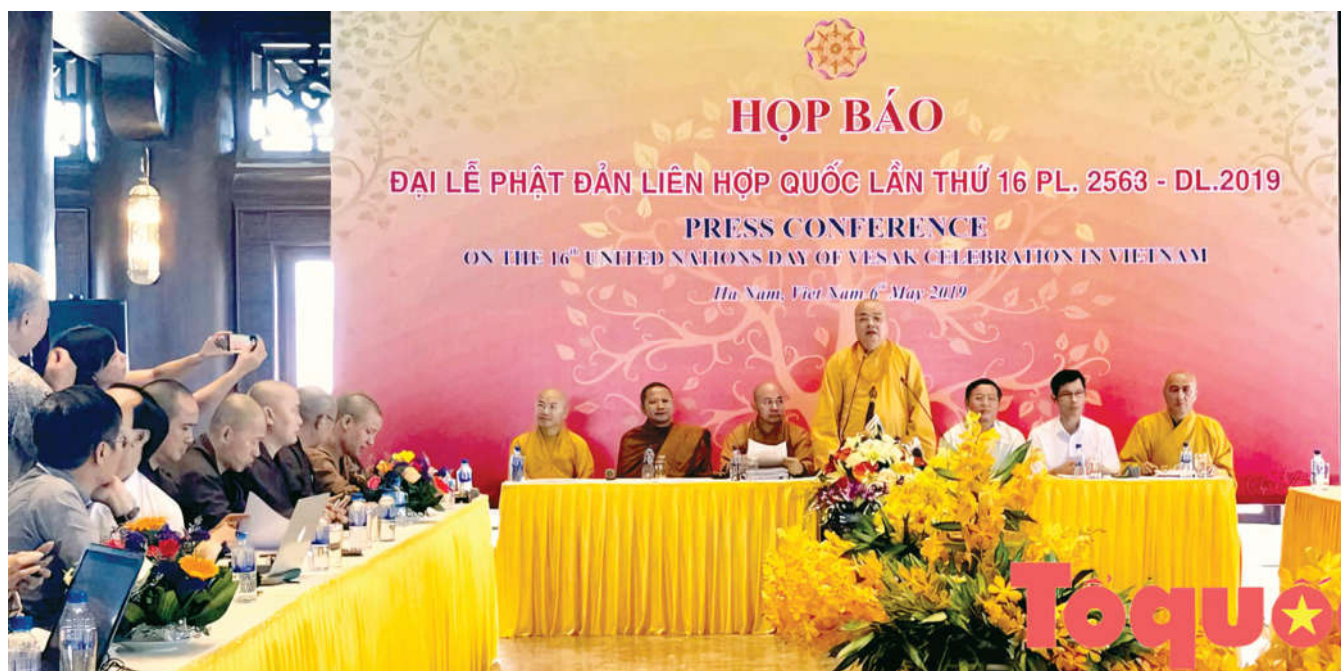
♦ Towards a Successful Event with the Collective Efforts of Society

Vesak 2019 is being organized with funds primarily raised through socialization efforts led by the VBS. The event not only reaffirms the position of Vietnamese Buddhism in the international community but also demonstrates the solidarity between the state, the VBS, and the people, fostering a strong connection with the global community. With thorough preparation and a spirit of unity, Vesak 2019 is set to be a successful and memorable event, leaving a deep impression on Buddhists and international friends alike.



The scene of the press conference. *Photo: Mat Tran Newspaper*

PRESS CONFERENCE ON UN VESAK 2019: HONORING GLOBAL VALUES OF HUMANITY AND PEACE



The Vietnam Buddhist Church held a press conference to provide information about the United Nations Vesak 2019 Buddha's Birthday Celebration. Source: <https://bvhttdl.gov.vn/dai-le-phat-dan-lien-hop-quoc-vesak-2019-ton-vinh-gia-tri-nhan-van-hoa-binh-cho-nhan-loai-20190506205016343.htm>

On the afternoon of May 6, 2019, at the Tam Chuc Buddhist Cultural Center (Ha Nam), the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (GHPGVN) held an official press conference for the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019. The event drew the participation of a wide array of dignitaries, government officials, and both domestic and international journalists, emphasizing the importance of Vesak not only to Buddhism but to the global community.

♦ Meticulous Preparation for a Major International Event

In his opening remarks, Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu, Standing Vice Chairman of the Central Council of the GHPGVN, stressed that UN Vesak 2019 is a significant cultural event with international scope, aimed at celebrating the values of humanity

and peace. Under the theme “*Buddhist Approach to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Sustainable Societies*,” Vesak 2019 marks the third time Vietnam has hosted the event, highlighting the country's contribution to global harmony and development.

♦ Main Content and Key Activities of Vesak 2019

UN Vesak 2019 will take place from May 12 to 14, 2019, at the Tam Chuc Buddhist Cultural Center, Kim Bang district, Ha Nam province. Key activities include the traditional Buddha bathing ceremony, prayers for national peace and global harmony, a candlelit vigil for world peace, and an exhibition of world heritage temples. Additionally, the event will feature international Buddhist cultural performances and the launch of a special stamp to commemorate the occasion.

♦ **Participation of Global Leaders and International Delegations**

The 2019 UN Vesak is expected to attract more than 570 international delegations, with 1,650 delegates from 112 countries and territories. Prominent leaders such as the President of Myanmar, the Prime Minister of Nepal, the Vice President of India, the President of the Bhutanese Senate, and the UN Deputy Secretary-General will attend. In addition, nearly 400 papers from international scholars and 110 papers from Vietnamese scholars will be presented at scientific forums, covering topics such as responsible leadership for sustainable societies, Buddhism and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and family harmony education.

♦ **Addressing Questions and Coordination with Media Outlets**

During the press conference, representatives from domestic and international media posed questions

regarding the organization of the event, including the issuance of press credentials, arrangements for transportation and accommodation for journalists, and the support from the volunteer team. Vice Chairman of the Ha Nam Provincial People's Committee Bui Quang Cam and representatives of the GHPGVN addressed these concerns, assuring that local authorities and residents had thoroughly prepared for this important event.

♦ **Vesak 2019 – Vietnam's Pride on the Global Stage**

UN Vesak 2019 is not merely a religious event but also an opportunity for Vietnam to showcase its active role in promoting peace and sustainable development. With careful preparation and enthusiastic participation from numerous countries, Vesak 2019 promises to leave a lasting impression on the global community, spreading Buddhism's message of peace and compassion.



Vice Chairman of Ha Nam Provincial People's Committee Bui Quang Cam answered reporters' questions.

Photo: <https://hanam.gov.vn/>

INSPECTION OF PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2019 UN VESAK VIETNAM: COLLECTIVE EFFORTS FROM MULTIPLE SECTORS

On May 2, 2019, Deputy Prime Minister Truong Hoa Binh conducted an on-site inspection of the preparations for the 2019 United Nations Day of Vesak at the Tam Chuc Buddhist Cultural Center in Ha Nam. The 2019 Vesak celebration is regarded as a significant international event, not only for the global Buddhist community but also for Vietnam, as it provides an opportunity to promote the country's image, people, and culture. It serves as a platform to showcase the government's progressive religious policies while fostering economic growth, tourism, and diplomacy.

♦ The Importance of Vesak for Vietnam

During the inspection, Deputy Prime Minister Binh emphasized that the success of the event would play a crucial role in enhancing Vietnam's image on the global stage. He instructed relevant agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Public Security, as well as local governments, to coordinate closely with the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha to



Deputy Prime Minister Truong Hoa Binh inspected the facilities for the 2019 United Nations Vesak Celebration.
Photo: Nguyen Chinh/TTXVN.



Deputy Prime Minister Trương Hòa Bình and the delegates offered incense at the Tam Thế temple, Tam Chúc pagoda.
Photo: Nguyễn Chinh/TTXVN.

complete all preparations by May 10, ensuring that everything is 100% ready.

♦ Infrastructure and Logistical Support

Several key facilities are near completion, including the Ngọc Pagoda, Tam Thế Hall, Tam Chúc Pavilion, and Mẫu Temple. Other areas, such as the Tam Quan Gate, pedestrian pathways, and surrounding roads, are also being finalized. On the logistical front, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha has meticulously organized a dining area spanning 4,000 square meters, specifically designated for serving vegetarian meals to delegates. Clean and safe ingredients are being sourced to ensure the highest standards of food safety.

♦ Security and Protection Measures

The Ministry of Public Security has developed a comprehensive plan to safeguard public order, ensure traffic safety, and prevent fire hazards during the event. Additionally, contingency plans for health protection, disease prevention, and transportation safety for delegates and visitors have been put in place. These measures reflect the government's commitment to ensuring the success of this international event.

♦ An Event of Global Significance

With participation from over 500 international

delegations representing 112 countries and territories, the 2019 Vesak event is expected to attract 1,650 international delegates and between 15,000 to 20,000 domestic Buddhists and visitors. In addition to scholarly presentations in both English and Vietnamese, the event will feature various cultural and spiritual activities at the Tam Chúc Pagoda, further enriching the experience for attendees.

♦ Promoting Vietnam's Image

The Vesak celebration presents a prime opportunity for Vietnam to showcase not only its rich Buddhist heritage but also the country's broader cultural and social landscape. Diplomatic activities, led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will further enhance international relations and bolster Vietnam's tourism and economic sectors.

♦ Conclusion

Preparations for the 2019 United Nations Day of Vesak in Ha Nam are progressing swiftly and thoroughly. With the government's close oversight, the coordinated efforts of ministries and local authorities, and the proactive involvement of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, this event promises to be a significant milestone, not only for the Buddhist community but also in the broader context of Vietnam's development trajectory.

THOROUGH MEDICAL PREPARATIONS FOR VESAK 2019: READY TO HANDLE ALL SITUATIONS

The 2019 United Nations Day of Vesak, a major international religious event hosted by the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, requires not only meticulous organizational planning but also comprehensive medical support. To ensure the health and safety of thousands of national and international delegates, Vietnam's healthcare sector has crafted and implemented a detailed medical plan.

♦ Ensuring the Health of Thousands of International Delegates

Associate Professor Lương Ngọc Khuê, Director of the Medical Examination and Treatment Administration, led a medical team in working with the Ha Nam Department of Health on May 8 to review preparations for Vesak 2019. Khuê emphasized that the healthcare sector is fully prepared to serve approximately 1,500 international delegates from 100 countries and territories, alongside thousands of domestic delegates and Buddhist followers. This significant event requires top-tier healthcare services to ensure that no medical incidents affect the proceedings.

♦ A Comprehensive Health Plan: From Disease Prevention to Food Safety

The Medical Examination and Treatment Administration, in collaboration with the Food Safety Department and the Department of Preventive Medicine, has developed a plan to ensure environmental sanitation and implement disease prevention measures. These steps aim to prevent any major outbreaks before and during the event, particularly focusing on food safety for delegates and guests. Medical teams will be stationed at event locations, ready to respond to emergencies, injuries, or sudden illnesses.

♦ Prepared for Any Emergency

Mobile emergency teams and reserves have been mobilized to handle critical situations, such as injuries, fires, food poisoning, or potential disasters. The Ministry of Health has instructed the Ha Nam, Ha Noi, and Ninh Binh Departments of Health to station medical teams at hotels where delegates are

staying, ensuring they can respond promptly to any emergencies.

Each medical team will be fully equipped with personnel and supplies, including two doctors, two nurses, one driver, and one ambulance. Moreover, hospitals in Ha Nam, Ha Noi, and Ninh Binh have prepared 5-10 high-quality hospital beds, ready to receive and treat guests and delegates if necessary. Each hospital will have a 24/7 emergency response team on standby.

♦ Conclusion

With meticulous preparations by the healthcare sector, Vesak 2019 at Tam Chuc Pagoda in Ha Nam is expected to proceed smoothly, ensuring the utmost safety for all delegates and guests. This is not only a major religious event but also a testament to the proactive professionalism and responsibility of Vietnam's healthcare system in protecting public health and enhancing the country's image on the global stage.



A PANORAMIC VIEW OF TAM CHUC PAGODA AHEAD OF THE 2019 UNITED NATIONS VESAK CELEBRATION: METICULOUS PREPARATIONS FOR A GRAND EVENT



Tam Chuc Ready to Welcome the 2019 United Nations Vesak Celebration: Tam Chuc Pagoda (Kim Bang District, Ha Nam) is entering its final preparation stages for the United Nations Vesak Celebration 2019, a significant religious event that will gather thousands of monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists from Vietnam and around the world. This marks the third time Vietnam has had the honor of hosting the Vesak Celebration, an event dedicated to promoting humanitarian values and global peace.

An Impressive Opening Ceremony: Scheduled for 8:00 AM on May 12, the official opening ceremony will feature the presence of Vietnam's top leaders, including Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, National Assembly Chairwoman Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, Standing Deputy Prime Minister Truong Hoa Binh, and Deputy Prime Minister cum Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh, along with representatives from various governmental bodies. From the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, the

Deputy Patriarch and many prominent monks and nuns from all 63 provinces, along with more than 20,000 lay Buddhists, will participate in this momentous event.

Widespread International Participation: According to the Organizing Committee, as of May 6, the 2019 United Nations Vesak Celebration has received registrations from 1,650 international delegates from 112 countries and territories. The presence of numerous international delegates highlights the growing influence of Vietnamese Buddhism and the global Buddhist community's keen interest in this significant occasion.

Maximum Security Measures: Lieutenant Colonel Le Van Tuan, Chief of Police of Kim Bang District, stated that over 200 officers and soldiers have been deployed to ensure public order throughout the event. Security forces have been divided into 26



task forces to oversee key transportation points and 10 specialized security teams stationed within the Tam Chuc Pagoda complex, ensuring the smooth and safe execution of the event.

Seamless Logistical Arrangements: To facilitate the transportation needs of monks, nuns, lay Buddhists, and visitors, the Organizing Committee has arranged for 150 electric vehicles to shuttle between Bai Dinh Pagoda and Tam Chuc. Among them, 100 vehicles have been in continuous operation since the morning of May 11, with the remaining 50 fully charged and ready for use, ensuring smooth and secure travel.

Final Preparations Before the Opening Ceremony: Thousands of Buddhist flags and festival banners fluttering vibrantly along the route from National Highway 1 to Tam Chuc Pagoda have created a solemn and magnificent atmosphere

for the Vesak Celebration. The meticulous completion of key structures, including the Buddhist Cultural Center, Quan Am Hall, and Tam The Hall, underscores the readiness of the venue. The presence of Most Venerable Thich Thien Nhon, Chairman of the Executive Council, personally inspecting the media center just before the opening ceremony, further affirms the event's significance.

The Spirit of Buddhism Resonates Across Tam Chuc: The tranquil and solemn ambiance of Tam Chuc Pagoda, with Buddhist ceremonies such as the pilgrimage to Quan Am Hall and Buddhist flags adorning the path to Tam The Hall, has created a sacred atmosphere, welcoming thousands of Buddhists and visitors to partake in the 2019 United Nations Vesak Celebration. This event not only honors Buddhism but also showcases the development of spiritual culture and strengthens the bond between Vietnam and the international community.



BEFORE THE OPENING CEREMONY: A JOYFUL ATMOSPHERE IN PREPARATION FOR THE 2019 UNITED NATIONS VESAK CELEBRATION AT TAM CHUC

Overview of Tam Chuc Pagoda before the Opening Ceremony of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019



♦ **Tam Chuc – A Convergence of Global Buddhist Essence**

With just one day left before the official opening, the 2019 United Nations Vesak Celebration is capturing the attention of not only the Vietnamese people but also Buddhists worldwide. Tam Chuc Pagoda, located in Ha Nam Province and the venue for this grand event, has been adorned with a radiant and solemn appearance, ready to welcome international delegations and tens of thousands of Buddhists. This marks the third time Vietnam has had the honor of hosting this significant religious event. The theme for this year's celebration is "Buddhist Approach to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Sustainable Societies."

♦ **The Landscape of Tam Chuc Before the Celebration: Meticulously Prepared and Striking**

From the early morning of May 11, the atmosphere at the Tam Chuc Pagoda complex has been more vibrant than ever. Along the pathway leading to the pagoda, tens of thousands of Buddhist flags and Vesak welcome banners are displayed,

creating a magnificent scene. On the lake in front of the pagoda entrance, seven colossal pink lotus flowers have been placed, symbolizing the seven steps of the Buddha, adding a profound and solemn highlight to the festival.

The focal point is the main hall where the opening ceremony will take place on the morning of May 12. The pathway leading to the main hall is meticulously decorated with lotuses, Buddhist flags, and other religious symbols. This central venue will host the key rituals, attended by thousands of international delegates and high-ranking officials from various countries.

♦ **Favorable Weather for Outdoor Activities**

According to forecasts from the Organizing Committee and local residents, temperatures in Tam Chuc are expected to remain at a comfortable 23-25 degrees Celsius, with cool air and light mist. These favorable weather conditions will facilitate smooth outdoor programs, ensuring comfort for international delegations and tens of thousands of Buddhists and visitors attending the event.



♦ **Enthusiastic Volunteers Contributing to the Celebration**

One of the highlights of the preparations for the 2019 United Nations Vesak Celebration is the dedicated contribution of volunteers and monastic students from the Vietnam Buddhist Academy. Arriving early, they have been divided into various groups to manage tasks such as guidance, logistical support, and traffic coordination. The presence of hundreds of volunteers not only ensures the smooth organization of the event but also reflects the hospitality and unity of Vietnamese Buddhists towards the international community.

♦ **Meticulous Preparations for the World's Largest Religious Gathering**

All preparation phases, from decorations to logistics, have been completed. The Organizing Committee has arranged detailed signage for different types of identification badges for delegates, ensuring smooth access to the opening ceremony venue. Beyond the scenic arrangements, key locations such as Tam Quan Gate, Tam The Hall,

and the exhibition area are fully ready to welcome visitors. Each area has been intricately adorned, offering a sacred and culturally rich Buddhist space.

♦ **A Festival of Peace and Buddhist Cultural Heritage**

With thorough preparations and an atmosphere of joyful anticipation spreading throughout Tam Chuc, the 2019 United Nations Vesak Celebration promises to be one of the most significant and meaningful religious events of the year. This is not only an occasion for revered monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists to gather but also an opportunity for Vietnam to affirm its role as a cultural and religious bridge with the international community.

The 2019 United Nations Vesak Celebration is more than just a religious festival; it is a symbol of peace, unity, and fraternity—a place where people can appreciate the beauty of Tam Chuc, experience the warmth and hospitality of the Vietnamese people, and collectively propagate the positive values taught by the Buddha.



THOUSANDS OF VOLUNTEERS JOIN HANDS FOR VESAK 2019: A COLLECTIVE EFFORT FOR A SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL EVENT



The enthusiastic elderly volunteers are active in their work. *Photo: laodong.vn*

On May 11, 2019, at the Tam Chuc International Buddhist Cultural Center in Ha Nam province, thousands of volunteers and Buddhists gathered early to assist in preparing for the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019. This event is not only a significant religious occasion, also serves as an opportunity for Vietnam to assert its position on the global stage through meticulous organization, warm hospitality, and dedicated volunteers.

♦ A Large and Professional Volunteer Force

With over 7,200 youth volunteers participating, Vesak 2019 mobilized an impressive volunteer force, all carefully selected for their foreign language proficiency, physical health, and skills. According to Ms. Đỗ Thị Kim Hoa, Director of the National Volunteer Center, these volunteers were not only tasked with providing logistical support but also

acted as communication bridges, facilitating smooth interactions for international delegates attending the event.

In addition to the youth, thousands of Buddhists from across the country also volunteered to contribute. They were divided into smaller groups, each responsible for different tasks such as logistics, food preparation, traffic management, and guiding both delegates and visitors. Whether large or small, every task was handled with meticulous care and responsibility to ensure the event ran smoothly.

♦ Large-scale Logistics: Prepared to Serve Tens of Thousands of Participants

One of the highlights of Vesak 2019's preparation was the enormous logistical scale. Approximately 1,000 volunteers were stationed at the kitchen and food areas, ensuring the provision

of free vegetarian meals for the tens of thousands of Buddhists and visitors.

The organizers dedicated a space of over 4,000 square meters for cooking and preparing vegetarian dishes. Each day, around 500 individuals participated in meal preparation, contributing to the production of 40,000 meal boxes and free drinks. This act of generosity not only symbolized hospitality but also embodied the compassionate spirit of Buddhism, ensuring that all participants were well taken care of.

♦ **Volunteers: The Silent Heroes**

Among the volunteers were not only youthful, energetic individuals but also older people who enthusiastically contributed their time and effort to Vesak. They worked with unwavering dedication, ready to set aside their commitments to support an international event of this magnitude.

The smiles and dedication of the volunteers became a beautiful image, symbolizing unity and the collective spirit for a successful Vesak. Each task, no matter how small—whether

distributing food, guiding guests, or preparing seating—was carried out with care, contributing significantly to the event's success.

♦ **Vesak 2019: Success Through Community Effort**

In conclusion, Vesak 2019 is not only a significant religious event but also an opportunity for Vietnam to demonstrate its unity and collaborative spirit in organizing an international occasion. The quiet but essential contributions of thousands of volunteers showcased Vietnam's hospitality, kindness, and care for the global Buddhist community.

With thorough preparation and a strong sense of responsibility, Vesak 2019 promises to be an unforgettable milestone for Buddhists, visitors, and international delegates, fostering peaceful relations and cooperation between nations.



The vegetarian cooking group provides free meals for up to 500 people each day.

Photo: laodong.vn



The preparation of 40,000 free meals and drinks for Buddhists and visitors attending the Great Festival.

Photo: laodong.vn

TENS OF THOUSANDS FLOCK TO TAM CHUC PAGODA FOR VESAK 2019



<https://laodong.vn/thoi-su/hang-van-nguoi-dan-nuom-nuop-ve-tam-chuc-du-dai-le-phat-dan-2019-732829.ldo>

On the early morning of May 12, tens of thousands of people and visitors from across the country gathered at Tam Chuc Pagoda in Ha Nam province to attend the opening ceremony of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019. This event, one of the most significant international Buddhist celebrations, was held in Vietnam with the participation of numerous religious and national leaders, along with thousands of Buddhists and international guests.

♦ Tam Chuc – Radiant in Colors for Vesak Celebration

In the days leading up to the event, the Tam Chuc Pagoda complex was adorned in vibrant colors, with Buddhist flags fluttering in the wind and fresh flowers lining the temple's entrance. The sight of giant lotus flowers floating on the lake in front of the main stage, symbolizing the Buddha's seven steps, created a sacred and magnificent atmosphere.

Hosted by the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, Vesak 2019 marked the third time Vietnam has had the honor of welcoming this important religious

event. With the attendance of over 1,650 international delegates from 112 countries and territories, this year's Vesak not only demonstrated Vietnam's reverence for global Buddhism but also affirmed the country's status on the international stage.

♦ Thousands Immerse Themselves in the Festive Atmosphere

From early morning, thousands of Buddhists and visitors flocked to Tam Chuc, streaming into the ceremony area to witness the grand opening. Everyone was eager to be part of one of the largest Buddhist events globally, marvel at the splendid decorations, and immerse themselves in the peaceful and sacred ambiance of the celebration.

In keeping with the spirit of warm hospitality, the organizers had prepared over 40,000 free vegetarian meals and drinks daily for all participants. Monks and nuns, wearing traditional Vietnamese conical hats, welcomed guests at Thuy Dinh, the venue of the main ceremony, creating a friendly and close-knit atmosphere imbued with Vietnamese culture.

♦ A Rich Array of Cultural and Artistic Activities

Within the framework of Vesak 2019, a series of cultural activities rich in tradition were also organized. Dragon boat processions and performances of folk music contributed to the vibrant festival atmosphere, offering a unique experience for visitors. Buddhist youth in traditional ao dai and conical hats waved flags to welcome the leaders and delegates, adding to the jubilant and celebratory spirit of the event.

Through the combination of spiritual significance and cultural richness, Vesak 2019 at Tam Chuc Pagoda has left a deep impression on both domestic and international attendees, highlighting Vietnam's dedication to Buddhist values and its growing role on the global religious and cultural stage.



Photo: TTXVN



Photo: Ngo Dung

CHAIRWOMAN NGUYEN THI KIM NGAN HOSTS BANQUET WELCOMING DELEGATION LEADERS ATTENDING VESAK 2019

On the evening of May 11, at the National Convention Center in Mỹ Đình, Hanoi, Politburo member and National Assembly Chairwoman Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan presided over a grand banquet in honor of the international delegates attending the 16th United Nations Day of Vesak in Vietnam.

The event was graced by the presence of high-ranking Vietnamese officials, including Central Committee members: Chief of the National Assembly Office and General Secretary of the National Assembly Nguyễn Hạnh Phúc; Minister of Home Affairs Lê Vĩnh Tân; and Chairman of the National Assembly's Committee for Culture, Education, Youth, Adolescents, and Children Phan Thanh Bình, as well as leaders from central and local ministries and agencies.

Among the esteemed international guests were His Excellency Win Myint, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and his wife; Vice President and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha of the Republic of India, Venkaiah Naidu; His Excellency Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, and his wife; and Tashi Dorji, Chairman of the National Council of Bhutan. Joining them were Venerable Professor Dr. Phra Brahmapundit, Chairman of the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV); His Eminence Thich Tri Quang, Deputy Supreme Patriarch of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha; high-ranking Buddhist dignitaries from across the world; ambassadors and representatives from embassies, international organizations in Vietnam, and over 1,650 delegates representing 570 international delegations from 113 countries, territories, and



Chairwoman of the National Assembly Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan spoke at the banquet.

international organizations attending Vesak in Vietnam.

In her welcoming remarks, Chairwoman Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan expressed her pleasure in meeting the venerable Buddhist dignitaries from across the globe, representatives from the United Nations and international organizations, delegates from various countries, as well as monks, nuns, and Buddhists from both within and outside of Vietnam. On behalf of the Party and State leadership, Chairwoman Ngan conveyed her warmest greetings, emphasizing the spirit of friendship, unity, and solidarity embodied in Vesak. She thanked the distinguished guests for accepting the invitation and making time to attend the United Nations Day of Vesak in Vietnam.

Chairwoman Ngan underscored that the annual Vesak celebration provides a significant opportunity to honor the Buddha's life of service to humanity. She commended the delegates for being "true messengers of peace," united by Buddhist principles to address global issues that impact

development worldwide. Chairwoman Ngan called for collective action, sharing the hope of achieving a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world for all.

The Chairwoman also stressed that Vesak 2019, hosted by Vietnam, is an opportunity to continue promoting the universal values of Buddhism, while exploring and contributing Buddhist perspectives on issues such as peace, environmental protection, healthcare, education, and global ethics. She highlighted the importance of wisdom, compassion, and tolerance in addressing these

issues, emphasizing that these values contribute to both personal happiness and a brighter future for humanity and the planet.

In conclusion, Chairwoman Ngan expressed her hopes that the Vesak 2019 celebrations would offer meaningful experiences for all attendees, fostering deeper connections among Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, while offering opportunities to explore Vietnam's rich cultural heritage and warm hospitality.



Chairwoman of the National Assembly Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan with Heads of State and international Buddhist delegations. Ảnh: Trong Duc - TTXVN

PART II:

UN VESAK 2019: MAIN ACTIVITIES





Overview of the World Peace Prayer Ceremony at the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019. *Photo: Vo Van Tuong*

PROGRAM OF THE UNITED NATIONS DAY OF VESAK 2019 IN HA NAM, VIETNAM

| Sunday, 12 May | |
|----------------|---|
| 6:00 AM | Breakfast at hotels |
| 6:30 AM | Delegation of Sangha members from the Executive Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (GHPGVN) in provinces and cities, staying in Hanoi and Ninh Binh, depart for Tam Chuc, Ha Nam. |
| 7:00 AM | Delegates staying in Ha Nam depart from hotels to the International Buddhist Conference Center at Tam Chuc Temple. |
| 8:00 AM | Delegation of Sangha members from the Executive Council of GHPGVN in provinces and cities, staying in Hanoi/Ninh Binh, arrive at Tam Chuc. |
| | Delegates staying in Ha Nam arrive at the International Buddhist Conference Center at Tam Chuc Temple. |
| 8:15 AM | Reception of leaders of the Party, State, Vietnam Fatherland Front (MTTQVN), national leaders, guests, and Ambassadors. |
| 8:30 AM | Senior monastics, leaders of the Party, State, MTTQVN, national leaders, guests, and Ambassadors enter the main hall. |
| 8:30 AM | Opening artistic performance. |
| 8:35 AM | Triple Gem Ceremony. |
| 8:40 AM | Speech by the Chairman of the International Organizing Committee 2019 (Vietnam). |
| 8:45 AM | Speech by the Founding Chairman of the International Organizing Committee (Thailand). |
| 8:50 AM | Message from the Supreme Patriarch of GHPGVN. |
| 9:00 AM | Speech by the leaders of the Party, State, and MTTQVN. |
| 9:05 AM | Message from the United Nations Secretary-General H.E. António Guterres (delivered by the UN Resident Coordinator in Hanoi). |
| 9:10 AM | Message from the Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana. |
| 9:15 AM | Message from the Director-General of UNESCO H.E. Audrey Azoulay (delivered by the Chief Representative of UNESCO in Hanoi). |
| 9:20 AM | Messages from Buddhist leaders and national leaders. |
| 9:30 AM | Keynote presentation: Buddhist Approach to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Sustainable Societies. |
| | Buddha Bathing Ceremony (organized by the Propagation Committee for Buddhist laypeople at Thich Ca Shrine). |
| 9:50 AM | Presentations by leaders, politicians, and world Buddhist leaders. |
| 11:30 AM | Lunch. |
| 13:30 AM | Speech by the President of MTTQVN/Head of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs. |

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 14:00 AM | Messages from leaders of global Buddhist organizations. |
| 16:30 AM | Group photo session. |
| 17:00 AM | Commemorative tree planting. |
| 17:30 AM | Dinner. |
| 18:30 PM | Dharma talk on the significance of Buddha's Birthday. |
| 19:00 PM | International cultural exchange performance. |
| 20:45 PM | Return to hotels. |
| Monday, 13 May | |
| 6:00 AM | Breakfast at hotels |
| 7:00 PM | Transport of delegates from hotels to Tam Chuc Temple. |
| 7:30 PM | Delegates arrive at Tam Chuc Temple. |
| 8:00 PM | Buddhist chanting and prayer ceremony by Buddhist delegations. |
| 8:30 PM | Group workshops. |
| 11:30 PM | Lunch. |
| 13:00 PM | Continuation of thematic group workshops. |
| 15:00 PM | Tea break. |
| 16:00 PM | Conclusion of thematic group workshops. |
| 17:30 PM | Dinner. |
| 19:00 PM | Lantern Festival and chanting ceremony for national prosperity and world peace. |
| 21:00 PM | Return to hotels. |
| Tuesday, 14 May | |
| 7:00 AM | Visit to Trang An Scenic Landscape Complex, Ninh Binh. |
| 8:00 PM | Secretariat compiles workshop results. |
| | Discussion of the draft Vesak 2019 Joint Declaration – Ha Nam Declaration. |
| 11:00 AM | Lunch at Tam Chuc Temple. |
| 13:00 PM | Closing Ceremony of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019. |
| 13:15 PM | Discussion and conclusion of workshops. |
| 14:50 PM | Procession of Buddhist and government leaders into the conference hall. |
| 15:00 PM | Closing speech by the GHPGVN Organizing Committee. |
| 15:10 PM | Speech by H.T. Prof. Dr. Brahmapundit, President of ICDV. |
| 15:20 PM | Speech by Permanent Deputy Prime Minister Truong Hoa Binh. |
| 15:40 PM | Summary report of the event. |
| | Adoption of the Ha Nam Declaration. |
| 17:30 PM | Dinner. |
| 19:30 PM | Delegates return to hotels. |
| Wednesday, 15 May | |
| All day | Farewell and departure of delegates to the airport. |



ĐẠI LỄ PHẬT ĐẢN LIÊN HỢP QUỐC
UN VESAK LẦN THỨ 16

Ngày 12 - 14 tháng 05 năm 2019
Chùa Tam Chúc, Hà Nam, Việt Nam

THE 16th
UNITED NATIONS
DAY OF

VESAK

AT CHUC TEMPLE HA NAM, VIETNAM
12th - 14th May 2019

BE 2563

CE 2019



**OPENING CEREMONY OF VESAK
2019: A CONVERGENCE OF BUDDHIST WISDOM
AND A GLOBAL MESSAGE OF PEACE**



THE 16th UNITED NATIONS DAY OF
VESAK CELEBRATIONS

12th - 14th May 2019
Tam Chuc Temple, Ha Nam, Viet Nam

ĐẠI LỄ
PHẬT ĐẢN

LIÊN HỢP QUỐC
LẦN THỨ 16
CHÙA TAM CHÚC, HÀ NAM, VIỆT NAM

PL 2563

DL 2019



Heads of State and Global Buddhist Leaders at the Opening Ceremony. *Photo: Ngo Dung*

On the morning of May 12, at the Tam Chuc Buddhist Culture Center in Ha Nam province, the 16th United Nations Day of Vesak officially opened with the theme “Buddhist Approaches to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Sustainable Societies.” This marks the third time Vietnam has hosted this international Buddhist cultural event, with a record number of participating countries and speakers.

♦ Gathering of International Leaders and Top Religious Figures

Vesak 2019 welcomed over 1,650 international delegates from 112 countries and territories, along with more than 20,000 Buddhists and citizens from Vietnam. The opening ceremony saw the presence of high-profile international leaders, including President Win Myint of Myanmar, Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli of Nepal, Vice President and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha of India Venkaiah Naidu, and Chairman of the National Council of Bhutan Tashi Dorji. Additionally, UN Under Secretary-General Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana participated and delivered a meaningful message at the event.

On the Vietnamese side, in addition to Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, there were notable appearances by National Assembly Chairwoman Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, Standing Deputy Prime Minister Truong Hoa Binh, Head of the Central

Commission for Mass Mobilization Trương Thị Mai, Chairman of the Vietnam Fatherland Front Central Committee Trần Thanh Mẫn, former National Assembly Chairmen Nguyễn Văn An and Nguyen Sinh Hung, and many other leaders from ministries and local governments.

♦ A Sacred and Meaningful Opening Ceremony

The ceremony began with traditional rituals and the Buddha Bathing Ceremony, symbolizing purification and the initiation of compassion and wisdom. Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, alongside other leaders and international delegates, participated in this sacred act, showing reverence for Buddha and the spirit of peace and tolerance that He has imparted to humanity.

In his opening remarks, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc emphasized that Vesak is a powerful testament to the United Nations’ commitment to building a peaceful, cooperative, and harmonious world. He highlighted the role of Buddhism in fostering positive values to create a harmonious and prosperous society.

♦ Speeches from Buddhist Leaders and International Dignitaries

In his address, Supreme Patriarch Nguyễn Phú Trọng Phổ Tuệ, the leader of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, stated that Vesak is not only a sacred event marking the life of Buddha but also an opportunity for humanity to grow in their faith in the truth of

liberation, wisdom, and compassion that Buddha taught. The Patriarch expressed his hope that Vesak 2019 would serve as a platform for delegates to discuss and find compassionate, wise solutions to global issues.

His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon, Chairman of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha Executive Council, also underscored the importance of Buddhist tolerance, harmony, and compassion in addressing the growing global challenges of conflict, war, inequality, and environmental crises. He stressed that global leadership must ensure fairness, balance interests, and resolve conflicts between nations and cultures.

International leaders also delivered strong messages at the event. In his speech, Vice President and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha of India Venkaiah Naidu emphasized the role of Buddhism in addressing current challenges, including climate change and social inequality. He called for the global Buddhist community to unite to create comprehensive solutions for a sustainable future.

In his message to Vesak 2019, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres stressed that “Buddha’s message of nonviolence and service to others has never been more relevant than in today’s world.” He urged the global community to work together to build a more peaceful and just world.

♦ Vesak 2019: An Opportunity for Buddhism to Contribute to Sustainable Development

Vesak 2019 is not only an occasion to honor the values of Buddhism but also an opportunity for the international Buddhist community to come together to discuss pressing global issues. The discussions at Vesak focused on key topics such as mindful global leadership, harmonious families, healthcare, and global ethics, as well as addressing the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Delegates agreed that the core values of compassion and wisdom in Buddhism are vital guides for building a sustainable, peaceful, and prosperous society.

♦ Conclusion: A Call to Action for Peace

In conclusion, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc called on each participant to become a messenger of Buddha, bringing the message of peace and love into everyday life. He affirmed that Vietnam always respects and upholds the values of Buddhism as a solid foundation for social development. He expressed his hope that Vesak 2019 would bring profound spiritual value to the delegates while contributing to stronger friendships and peace among nations.

Vesak 2019 is not just a time to honor Buddha but also an opportunity for the global community to reflect and act for a better world, where peace, love, and wisdom are shared and spread.



Photo: Ngo Dung

SOLEMN OPENING OF VESAK 2019: SPREADING THE SPIRIT OF GLOBAL PEACE AND RESPONSIBILITY



Overview of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019 Conference Hall. *Photo: Ngo Dung*

On the morning of May 12, 2019, the United Nations Day of Vesak (Vesak 2019) officially opened at the Tam Chuc Buddhist Cultural Center in Ha Nam Province. This is the third time Vietnam has had the honor of hosting this major international event, with the theme “*Buddhist Approach to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibility for Sustainable Societies.*”

♦ **An International Religious Event Attracting Thousands of Delegates**

Vesak 2019 gathered over 1,650 delegates from 112 countries and territories, along with more than 20,000 monks, nuns, Buddhists, and tens of thousands of visitors. The opening ceremony was graced by high-ranking Vietnamese leaders, including Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, former National Assembly Chairmen Nguyen Van An and Nguyen Sinh Hung, President of the Vietnam Fatherland Front Tran Thanh Man, and many other Party and State leaders, alongside representatives from various ministries and local authorities.

Notably, the event attracted many international heads of state and global leaders, such as President of Myanmar Win Myint, Vice President and Chairman of the Upper House of India Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister of Nepal Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, Chairman of the Upper House of Bhutan Tashi Dorji, and UN Under-Secretary-General Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana. This highlights the global significance of Vesak, not only for the Buddhist community but for the world at large.

♦ **The Message of the Patriarch: Peace, Compassion, and Buddhism’s Companionship with Humanity**

His Eminence Thich Tri Quang, First Deputy Supreme Patriarch of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha’s Council of Elders, delivered the Patriarch’s message at the opening ceremony. The message emphasized that Vesak 2019 provides a crucial opportunity for the global Buddhist community to share specific solutions to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. It is also an occasion to promote core Buddhist values such as wisdom, compassion, and non-violence, contributing to the building of a peaceful and prosperous world.

With over 2,000 years of history in Vietnam, Buddhism has proven its steadfast companionship with the nation, forming a solid ideological foundation. The Buddhist essence of Vietnam not only aids in national development but also fosters international integration and positive contributions to the global community.

♦ **Global Leadership: Confronting Challenges and Responsibilities**

In his opening speech, His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon, President of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and Chairman of the Vesak 2019 National Organizing Committee, emphasized that the world today faces many challenges, such as conflicts, wars, environmental crises, and climate





His Holiness Thich Tri Quang, the First Deputy Supreme Patriarch of the Central Council of the Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha, presented the message of the Supreme Patriarch at the opening ceremony.

Photo: Ngo Dung

change. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is also reshaping every aspect of society, requiring mindful, balanced, and responsible global leadership.

Venerable Nhon called on the global Buddhist community to promote the Buddhist values of tolerance, selflessness, and compassion to help address these global challenges. He stressed that Buddhism holds many advantages in leading and sharing responsibility for a sustainable society, with significant teachings like Dependent Origination, Karma, and the Law of Cause and Effect.

♦ **International Conference: Buddhist Solutions to Global Issues**

Within the framework of Vesak 2019, several international conferences were organized, focusing on topics such as harmonious family, healthcare, global ethical education, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Delegates also discussed how Buddhism can contribute to responsible consumption and sustainable development. The results of these discussions will be compiled into the Ha Nam Declaration, a key statement on the role of Buddhism in addressing global issues, which will be announced worldwide.

♦ **Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc: Vesak Exceeds a Religious Festival**

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc affirmed that Vesak 2019 is more than

just a religious event; it is an opportunity to highlight the essence of Buddhism and spread the message of peace, harmony, and tolerance taught by Buddha. He noted that Buddhist values remain relevant in establishing peaceful relations between nations and peoples and in contributing to the construction of a prosperous and sustainable world.

The Prime Minister emphasized that in the face of global challenges, such as wars, natural disasters, and climate change, people need to reconnect with human values and seek inner peace. He urged everyone to take a moment of calm reflection on the teachings of the Buddha to work together in creating a more peaceful and harmonious world.

♦ **Vesak: A Cultural and Religious Bridge Connecting the World**

Once again, Vesak 2019 affirms Vietnam's position on the international stage as a cultural and religious bridge. The event not only honors Buddha and his teachings but also offers an opportunity for the global Buddhist community to share responsibility and cooperate for a peaceful, harmonious, and sustainable world.

With its meaningful theme and diverse activities, Vesak 2019 has left a deep impression on attendees, reinforcing the role of Buddhism in building a better world.



Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc spoke at the opening ceremony.

Photo: Ngo Dung



Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and the Prime Minister of Nepal performing the Buddha Bathing Ceremony before the Opening Ceremony of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019. *Photo: Ngo Dung*





TẠI LỄ PHẬT ĐẢN LIÊN HỢP QUỐC

UN VESAK LẦN THỨ 16

Ngày 12 - 14 tháng 05 năm 2019
Chùa Tam Chúc, Hà Nam, Việt Nam



THE 16th UNITED NATIONS DAY OF VESAK CELEBRATIONS

12th -14th May 2019

Tam Chuc Temple, Ha Nam, Viet Nam





All international and Vietnamese delegates attending the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019 at Tam Chuc Pagoda, Ha Nam Province. *Photo: Ngo Dung*





Photo: Ngo Dung

THE 2019 INTERNATIONAL VESAK CONFERENCE: INSIGHTS AND SOLUTIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY

On May 13, 2019, at the Tam Chuc Buddhist Cultural Center in Ha Nam, the International Organizing Committee of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019 convened an international scientific conference under the theme “Buddhist Approach to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Sustainable Societies.” The event brought together over 1,600 international delegates from 112 countries and territories, including Buddhist leaders, scholars, professors, doctors, and a large number of Buddhists. The conference was convened by Most Venerable Dr. Thich Nhat Tu, who also served as Vice Secretary-General of the National Vesak Organizing Committee. He oversaw the conference sessions, which were structured with three thematic sessions each day: one in the morning and two in the afternoon. Each session featured five speakers, with

each given five minutes to present, followed by 45 minutes of rebuttal discussions.

♦ Key Themes of the Conference

The conference focused on five main topics:

1. Mindful Leadership for Sustainable Peace
2. The Buddhist Approach to Harmonious Families, Healthcare, and Sustainable Societies
3. The Buddhist Approach to Global Ethical Education
4. Buddhism and the Fourth Industrial Revolution
5. The Buddhist Approach to Responsible Consumption and Sustainable Development

In his remarks, Venerable Dr. Thich Nhat Tu emphasized that this Vesak was the most prolific yet in terms of academic contributions. The Organizing

Committee received nearly 400 papers from international delegates in English, and 110 papers from Vietnamese scholars. The diversity and quality of these submissions were highlighted, addressing a wide range of important topics within Buddhism.

♦ Content and Discussions

During the conference, more than 100 presentations were delivered before a large audience of scholars and researchers. These presentations not only focused on issues such as mindful leadership and sustainable peace but also explored the connections between Buddhism and global challenges such as the environment, consumption, and education. Notably, the discussions addressed modern challenges like Buddhist missionary work in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Buddhist ethical thought on environmental protection, and the relationship between Buddhism and global ethics, all emphasizing the practical importance of Buddhist teachings in addressing contemporary issues.

♦ Mindful Leadership and Global Responsibility

The topic of mindful leadership for sustainable peace garnered significant interest. Presentations clarified how Buddhism, through mindfulness and compassion, can guide leaders in making wise decisions, addressing global issues. Scholars analyzed Buddhism's core values, emphasizing the importance of mindful leadership in building peace and promoting sustainable development.

♦ Buddhism and Harmonious Families

In discussions on the Buddhist approach to harmonious families, healthcare, and sustainable societies, scholars highlighted the role of the family in shaping a healthy society. Presentations on Buddhist family ethics, love, marriage, and methods for fostering harmonious families reinforced the importance of traditional Buddhist values in maintaining a sustainable society.

♦ Buddhism and Global Ethical Education

Global ethical education was a key theme of the conference. Numerous presentations explored Buddhism's contributions to ethical education worldwide, emphasizing the role of wisdom and ethics in addressing contemporary social challenges. Scholars shared insights into applying Buddhist educational philosophy in modern life, fostering a new generation capable of tackling global issues.

♦ Buddhism and the Fourth Industrial Revolution

At the forum on Buddhism and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, presentations pointed out that Buddhism is not only a spiritual practice but also highly adaptable in the digital age. Many discussions centered on how Buddhism can leverage technology for outreach, expanding its influence in modern society.

♦ Responsible Consumption and Sustainable Development



Photo: Ngo Dung



Photo: Ngo Dung

The theme of responsible consumption and sustainable development was another highlight of the conference. Presentations analyzed the relationship between consumption and the environment, demonstrating how Buddhism, with its philosophy of simple living and harmony with nature, can help mitigate the negative impacts of overconsumption on the environment.

Vision for the Future

The Vesak 2019 conference was not only a platform for academic exchange but also an

opportunity for leaders and scholars to share practical experiences and propose concrete solutions for building a sustainable society. The discussions shed new light on the role of Buddhism in guiding and addressing contemporary challenges.

The conference concluded with a strong commitment from the delegates to continue spreading the core values of Buddhism worldwide, contributing to the creation of a peaceful, sustainable, and compassionate society.



Photo: Ngo Dung



Photo: Ngo Dung



Photo: Ngo Dung



Photo: Ngo Dung



CLOSING CEREMONY OF UNITED NATIONS VESAK DAY 2019: A JOURNEY OF COMPASSION AND WISDOM FOR PEACE



ĐẠI LỄ PHẬT ĐẢN LIÊN HỢP QUỐC
UN VESAK LẦN THỨ 16
Ngày 12 - 14 tháng 05 năm 2019
Chùa Tam Chúc, Hà Nam, Việt Nam

THE 16th
UNITED NATIONS
DAY OF
VESAK

TAM CHÚC TEMPLE HA NAM, VIETNAM
12th - 14th May 2019

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THE 16th UNITED NATIONS D VESAK CELEBRATIONS

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LIÊN HỢP QUỐC
LẦN THỨ 16
CHÙA TAM CHỨC, HÀ NAM, VIỆT

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Overview of the Closing Ceremony of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019. *Photo: Ngo Dung*



On the morning of May 14, 2019, the United Nations Vesak Day 2019 officially concluded at Tam Chuc Pagoda, Ha Nam, Vietnam, with the participation of delegates from over 112 countries and territories. The ceremony culminated with the Ha Nam Declaration 2019—a powerful message advocating peace, sustainable development, and wisdom for the modern era. This international religious event, centered on the theme *“Buddhist Approach to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibility for Sustainable Societies,”* emphasized the global relevance of Buddhist teachings in today’s world.

♦ A Festival Honoring Compassion and Wisdom

United Nations Vesak Day is not only a celebration of the life of Buddha Shakyamuni but also an opportunity for Buddhist leaders and international officials to discuss solutions toward peace and sustainable development. The ceremony was graced by the presence of Elder Most Venerable Thich Duc Nghiep, Vice President of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha’s Council of Patrons, along with other senior Buddhist dignitaries. Most Venerable Thich Thien Nhon, President of the Executive Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS), Co-President of the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV), and Chair of the National Committee for Vesak 2019, also attended alongside VBS leaders.

International dignitaries included the President of the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Mr. Tashi Dorji, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Ms. Amida Salsiah Alisjahbana, as well as representatives from diplomatic corps and international organizations in Vietnam. In his speech, Permanent Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam, Mr. Truong Hoa Binh, underscored that core Buddhist values of compassion and harmony are the foundation for global peace and sustainable development.

♦ Global Leaders Share a Vision

The ceremony welcomed the presence of prominent international leaders. Mr. Tashi



Chairman of the Senate of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Mr. Tashi Dorji.

Photo: Ngo Dung

Dorji, President of Bhutan’s National Assembly, congratulated Vietnam on the successful organization of Vesak 2019 and emphasized that Buddhist culture plays a foundational role in Bhutanese society. He expressed admiration for the King of Bhutan, a devout Buddhist, whose exemplary life serves as a guide for the nation, steering it on a path of compassion and wisdom.

In his speech, Most Venerable Thich Thien Nhon expressed profound gratitude to ICDV for entrusting the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha with the responsibility of hosting this prestigious international event. He extended heartfelt thanks to the heads of state, UN leaders, and Vietnam’s government agencies, particularly the authorities of Ha Nam province. Most Venerable Thich Thien Nhon acknowledged that the success of Vesak 2019 was not only due to the efforts of all parties involved but also to the “miraculous support” of the Buddha, as well as the contributions of Xuan Truong Enterprises, the clergy, and the thousands of volunteers who ensured the event’s smooth execution.

♦ Challenges and Commitments for the Future

During the closing remarks, Venerable Thich Nhat Tu, Deputy Secretary-General of Vesak 2019, reflected on the history of Vesak Day, which was first recognized by the United Nations in 1999 at its headquarters in New York. Since 2000, the annual Vesak celebrations have been held at the UN headquarters in New York, and this is the third time

Vietnam has been honored to host the event, welcoming distinguished guests from many countries.

Venerable Thich Nhat Tu highlighted the various programs of Vesak 2019, noting that the world is currently facing numerous challenges that require collective efforts to seek solutions. He emphasized that it is essential to tread the right path to overcome these global crises. Venerable Nhat Tu also underscored the importance of the five international and national forums held on May 11 and 13, where Buddhist dignitaries, scholars, and researchers contributed their wisdom and insights.

♦ **Ha Nam Declaration 2019: A Global Commitment**

The Ha Nam Declaration 2019, presented by Most Venerable Thich Duc Thien, Secretary-General of Vesak 2019, reaffirmed that compassion and harmony should guide all actions toward building a peaceful and sustainable world. This declaration is not only a message of peace but a call for international collaboration in addressing global issues, especially in protecting the environment and reducing conflict.

♦ **A Successful Conclusion**

As the ceremony concluded, the Vesak 2019 Organizing Committee donated 1 billion VND to the Ha Nam Scholarship Fund, reflecting the Buddhist spirit of mutual support in education. On behalf of Ha Nam's leadership, Mr. Nguyen Xuan Dong, Chairman of the Ha Nam People's Committee, extended sincere thanks to the heads of state, Buddhist dignitaries, and international delegates for their participation, contributing to the success of United Nations Vesak Day 2019.



His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon, Chairman of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, delivering the Closing Speech. *Photo: Ngo Dung*



Ven. Thich Nhat Tu presenting the final report. *Photo: Ngo Dung*

Vesak 2019 stands not only as a source of pride for Vietnam but also as a moment to affirm the role of Vietnamese Buddhism on the global stage, promoting peace, development, and sustainability for humanity.



Photo: Ngo Dung

**CLOSING CEREMONY
OF UNITED NATIONS VESAK 2019
IN VIETNAM:
A RESOUNDING SUCCESS WITH A GLOBAL
MESSAGE OF PEACE**



On the morning of May 14, 2019, at the International Conference Center of Tam Chuc Pagoda (Ha Nam province), the United Nations Vesak Day 2019 officially concluded after three days of significant activities. This important event attracted participation from 112 countries and territories, delivering messages of peace, sustainable development, and the compassion and wisdom of the Buddha.

♦ **Buddhist dignitaries and international leaders in attendance**

The closing ceremony was solemnly presided over by Elder Most Venerable Thich Duc Nghiep, Vice President of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha's Council of Patrons, alongside other senior Buddhist dignitaries. Most Venerable Thich Thien Nhon, President of the Executive Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS), Co-President of the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV), and Chairman of the National Organizing Committee of UN Vesak 2019, also attended with other VBS leaders. International representatives included the President of Bhutan's National Assembly, Mr. Tashi Dorji, and UN Under-Secretary-General, Ms. Amida Salsiah Alisjahbana, as well as representatives from international organizations and diplomatic corps in Vietnam.

♦ **Address by the VBS leadership: Achievements and gratitude**

In his address, Most Venerable Thich Thien Nhon, President of the Executive Council of the VBS, affirmed that the success of UN Vesak Day 2019 was not only the result of efforts by the VBS and international Buddhist organizations but also due to the invaluable support from the Vietnamese government and Ha Nam province. He expressed deep gratitude to Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, government ministries, local authorities, and especially Xuan Truong Enterprises for completing the Tam Chuc Buddhist complex—the venue for the event.

He emphasized that this success was also due to the “miraculous blessing” of the Buddha and the collective efforts of monks, nuns, Buddhists, and thousands of volunteers who worked together to ensure a seamless event. He expressed his hope that Vietnam would continue to host such impactful international events like Vesak in the future, spreading the Buddhist spirit of compassion and wisdom to the world.

♦ **Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister highlights harmony and development**

Speaking at the closing ceremony, Permanent Deputy Prime Minister Truong Hoa Binh highlighted that Vesak is an international cultural

and religious event that plays a crucial role in fostering friendship and harmony among nations. He emphasized that the core Buddhist values of compassion, harmony, and wisdom are essential foundations for addressing global challenges such as climate change, conflict, and poverty.

The Deputy Prime Minister expressed pride in Vietnam's economic and social achievements, affirming that the Vietnamese government respects and guarantees freedom of belief and religious equality. He committed to continued efforts by the government to introduce even more supportive policies for all religions, including Buddhism, to contribute to the country's overall development.

He also praised the organizing committee, the involved ministries, and Ha Nam province for their wholehearted support in ensuring the event's success. He noted that this year's Vesak not only affirmed Vietnam's position in the international



Buddhist community but also provided an opportunity for Buddhist leaders and scholars to engage in discussions on building a peaceful and sustainable world.

♦ **The Ha Nam Declaration 2019: Action for peace and sustainable development**

During the closing ceremony, Most Venerable Thich Duc Thien, Vice President and Secretary-General of the VBS, read the Ha Nam Declaration 2019. The declaration reaffirmed that Vesak is not just a religious event but also an opportunity for international Buddhist leaders and scholars to discuss and dialogue on solutions to global issues. It emphasized peace, sustainable development, and humanitarian values based on the Buddha's teachings of compassion and wisdom.

The declaration also highlighted the unity of Buddhist traditions worldwide, particularly in enhancing understanding and cooperation to

collectively build a peaceful world. This year's Vesak in Vietnam has contributed to strengthening connections among global Buddhist communities and organizations.

♦ **A successful conclusion to Vesak 2019**

The closing ceremony of UN Vesak 2019 concluded with the organizing committee donating 1 billion VND to the Ha Nam Scholarship Fund, reflecting the Buddhist spirit of mutual support in education. Mr. Nguyen Xuan Dong, Chairman of the Ha Nam People's Committee, expressed sincere gratitude to the heads of state, Buddhist dignitaries, and international delegates for their participation and contributions to the success of Vesak.

Vesak 2019 stands not only as a source of pride for Vietnam but also as a moment to affirm the role of Vietnamese Buddhism on the global stage, contributing to the building of a peaceful, sustainable, and prosperous world.



Photo: Ngo Dung





FULL TEXT OF THE HA NAM DECLARATION – UNITED NATIONS VESAK DAY 2019

On May 14, 2019, during the successful celebration of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019, held at Tam Chuc Pagoda, Ha Nam, Vietnam, with the participation of delegates from 112 countries and territories, the Ha Nam Declaration 2019 was officially announced. Vesak is a significant event in the Buddhist world, honoring the life and teachings of the Buddha Shakyamuni. The Ha Nam Declaration 2019 emphasizes the promotion of peace, compassion, and sustainable development, drawing inspiration from the principles of compassion, wisdom, and harmony within Buddhist teachings. The declaration calls upon nations to unite in collective action for the prosperity of humankind, while protecting the environment and addressing global challenges such as climate change, conflict, and poverty. This Vesak celebration also serves as a valuable opportunity for Buddhist leaders and international organizations to share experiences and collaborate in building a more peaceful and harmonious world. The Ha Nam Declaration 2019 concludes with a call for the global community to continue its efforts toward a better world, rooted in human values and the spirit of compassion and wisdom taught by the Buddha.

We, the delegates from 112 countries and territories, gathered at the International Buddhist Conference in honor of the United Nations Vesak Day at the International Convention Center of Tam Chuc Pagoda from May 12-14, 2019.

We convened at this assembly under the mandate of Resolution 54/115, adopted on December 15, 1999, by the United Nations General



Most Ven. Thich Duc Thien reading the Ha Nam Declaration. *Photo: Ngo Dung*

Assembly at its 54th session, agenda item 174, which declared that Vesak, the Day of the Full Moon in May (aligned with the 4th lunar month), would be internationally recognized and celebrated at UN Headquarters and regional offices from 2000 onwards. The United Nations Day of Vesak is co-organized by all Buddhist traditions as a sacred tripartite observance.

The Day of Vesak contributes to the enhancement of mutual understanding, cooperation, and solidarity among Buddhist traditions, organizations, and individuals through dialogue and exchanges between Buddhist leaders and scholars on issues of shared global concern.

After in-depth discussions, we unanimously adopt and announce a message of peace, sustainability, and other related matters, guided by the Buddha's teachings of compassion and wisdom.

While deliberating on the theme "Buddhist

Approach to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Sustainable Societies,” we shared perspectives, experiences, and research findings on emerging trends and developments across various fields, while carefully considering the significance, scope, complexity, and real-world implications of these issues globally.

We express our deep appreciation for the gracious hospitality extended by the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and the invaluable support of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in organizing the United Nations Vesak Day 2019 and the International Conference within its framework, which have been conducted successfully.

After three days of intense academic presentations, discussions, in-depth exchanges, participation in cultural events, and the strengthening of Buddhist friendship, we, the delegates present here at the Closing Ceremony of the successful United Nations Vesak Day and International Conference, unanimously adopt the Ha Nam Declaration 2019 as follows:

Article 1: Common Commitments

To better understand and fully implement the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, we resolve:

1.1. To take on an increasingly active role, both locally and globally, in sharing a greater responsibility with society to support, build, sustain, and develop sustainable societies in the face of deepening and complex social, political, economic, and cultural crises.

1.2. To breathe life into the concept of “Engaged Buddhism” by moving toward global activities and participating more actively in international organizations.

1.3. To endorse the Buddhist approach as a comprehensive model for realizing the ideal of peace and understanding the universal values of humanity.

1.4. To express solidarity with Buddhist philosophies in exploring the evolving characteristics and contexts in the pursuit of the Buddha’s teachings as a spiritual guide for global governance.

1.5. To recognize the framework of Buddhist-informed international action as a viable solution for the prosperity, development, and progress of humanity in the spirit of dependent origination.

1.6. To acknowledge the greatness of Buddhism in the modern era.

Article 2: Buddhist Response to Shared Responsibility

To promote the concept of shared responsibility, we resolve:

2.1. To create an active foundation and support for interactions by defining the crucial role of Buddhist communities worldwide.

2.2. To contribute our expertise based on Buddhist principles for the mutual benefit of all.

2.3. To extend the idea of compassionate action and selfless support to assist those outside the Buddhist community without any discrimination based on race, creed, religion, or gender.

2.4. To emphasize the importance of individual contributions within shared communities, by promoting the idea “if we don’t act, who will?”

2.5. To collaborate with international agencies at various levels of responsibility to achieve the ultimate Buddhist goal of transforming suffering.

2.6. To propagate the Five Buddhist Precepts and encourage the active participation of local communities to turn them into concrete objectives as the foundation for shared responsibility for better living conditions globally.

Article 3: Buddhist Approach to Sustainable Societies

Để tham dự cùng tạo nên các xã hội bền vững, chúng ta nêu quyết tâm:

To participate in creating sustainable societies, we resolve:

3.1. To utilize the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path as fundamental approaches to sustainable societies.

3.2. To foster interdependence among communities by recognizing the Buddha’s teachings as catalysts for the development of human potential in sustainability.

3.3. To breathe life into the integration of the three pillars of Buddhist development: environmental protection, economic growth, and social equity.

Article 4: Mindful Leadership for Sustainable Peace

4.1. To emphasize non-violent and dialogue-based approaches to peacebuilding, moving away from the outdated model of “might is right.”

4.2. To encourage the principles of compassion and wisdom as the foundation for avoiding and resolving disputes or conflicts.

4.3. To affirm the fundamental importance of mindful leadership in providing ethical guidance in both personal and societal contexts, contributing to peacebuilding: resolving disputes, respecting life, ending violence and arms races, overcoming inequality, and particularly practicing kindness and non-violence through dialogue and cooperation.

Article 5: Buddhist Approach to Harmonious Families, Healthcare, and Sustainable Societies

5.1. To acknowledge structural transformations within families and social systems while promoting Buddhist principles of harmonious communication to build harmonious families and sustainable societies.

5.2. To value the impact of healthy living, both physically and mentally, and facilitate the Buddhist wellness program by incorporating meditation practices and selecting health-beneficial dietary regimes.

5.3. To teach the Five Buddhist Precepts as part of the formal educational curriculum from kindergarten through high school, promoting the concept of positive, healthy, happy, ethical living, and harmonious family relationships.

5.4. To promote the spirit of the Five Buddhist Precepts within the judicial system, as the basis for character education and the reintegration of individuals imprisoned for violating the law.

Article 6: Buddhist Approach to Global Ethical Education

6.1. To reaffirm that the ultimate purpose of Buddhist ethical education is to free individuals from ego and suffering.

6.2. To promote the Buddhist concepts of impermanence and selflessness in global education as a means to control and transform greed, anger, and ignorance for a better world.

6.3. To integrate Buddhist principles with psychology and philosophy of education as a way of examining ethical issues in themselves.

6.4. To incorporate Buddhist ethical principles into national education systems at all levels, from primary to higher education.

6.5. To encourage the integration of wisdom and compassion in environmental stewardship, fostering synergy between individuals, schools, and communities.

Article 7: Buddhism and the Fourth Industrial Revolution

7.1. To encourage Buddhist practitioners to harness the tools of the Fourth Industrial Revolution to modernize the Buddhist study of the mind, utilizing research on robotics, artificial intelligence, sensors, and telemetry to heal and transform humanity.

7.2. To integrate Buddhist practices with modern technologies such as mindfulness-based computing and meditation apps.

7.3. To support continued research in the field of artificial intelligence as a means of assisting human life, providing opportunities for people to have more free time to pursue meaningful and noble tasks, though it is not meant to replace human beings.

7.4. To apply Buddhist philosophy to enhance our understanding of the world's functioning through algorithms.

7.5. To promote the Buddhist values of overcoming negative mental states such as greed, anger, and delusion as a contribution to mitigating the information security risks posed by the rapid changes in global communication systems brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Article 8: Buddhist Approach to Responsible Consumption and Sustainable Development

8.1. To spread the story of the Buddha's life as one who lived most of his life in harmony with nature, as a necessity rather than exploitation, thereby promoting the protection of nature and limiting unconscious exploitation of natural resources.

8.2. To apply the Buddhist spirit, emphasizing the principle of dependent origination – where all things rely on each other for existence – to ensure the balance of natural ecosystems and the harmony between humanity and the natural world.

8.3. To encourage the transition to clean and safe energy sources, replacing high-emission, polluting energy or those depleting natural resources.

8.4. To collaborate with businesses to develop alternative safe food sources that do not rely on animal protein.

Article 9: Policy Implementation and Conclusions

9.1. We call for the integration of the findings presented herein into the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals program.

9.2. We declare that now is the time for the global community to begin earnest reflection on Buddhist solutions and employ these solutions in today's rapidly changing world.

9.3. We affirm that Buddhist ethics hold cultural value in contributing to the development of a more compassionate society and in fundamentally building sustainable, just, and humane political, economic, and social systems.

9.4. We affirm that the Buddhist community can make decisive contributions to addressing the challenges of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

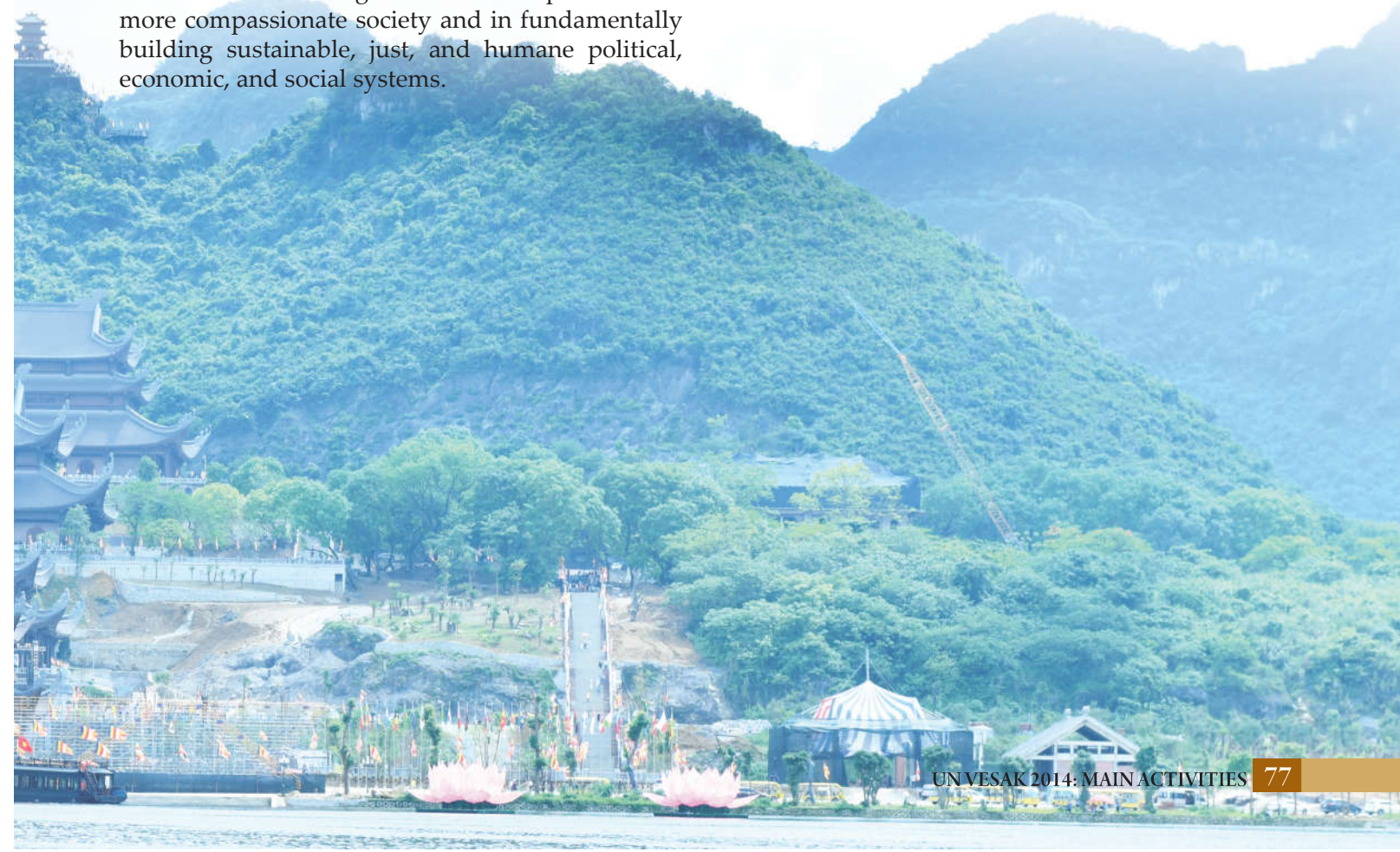
9.5. We urge world leaders to engage in more practical collaboration with Buddhist leaders to develop systems that encourage the realization of compassionate, socio-economic potentials, thus creating the world we all desire to live in.

9.6. We call on governments, civil society organizations, businesses, families, and individuals, regardless of religion or tradition, to lead ethical and moral lives in the spirit of dependent origination, aiming towards reconciliation, stability, and sustainable development.

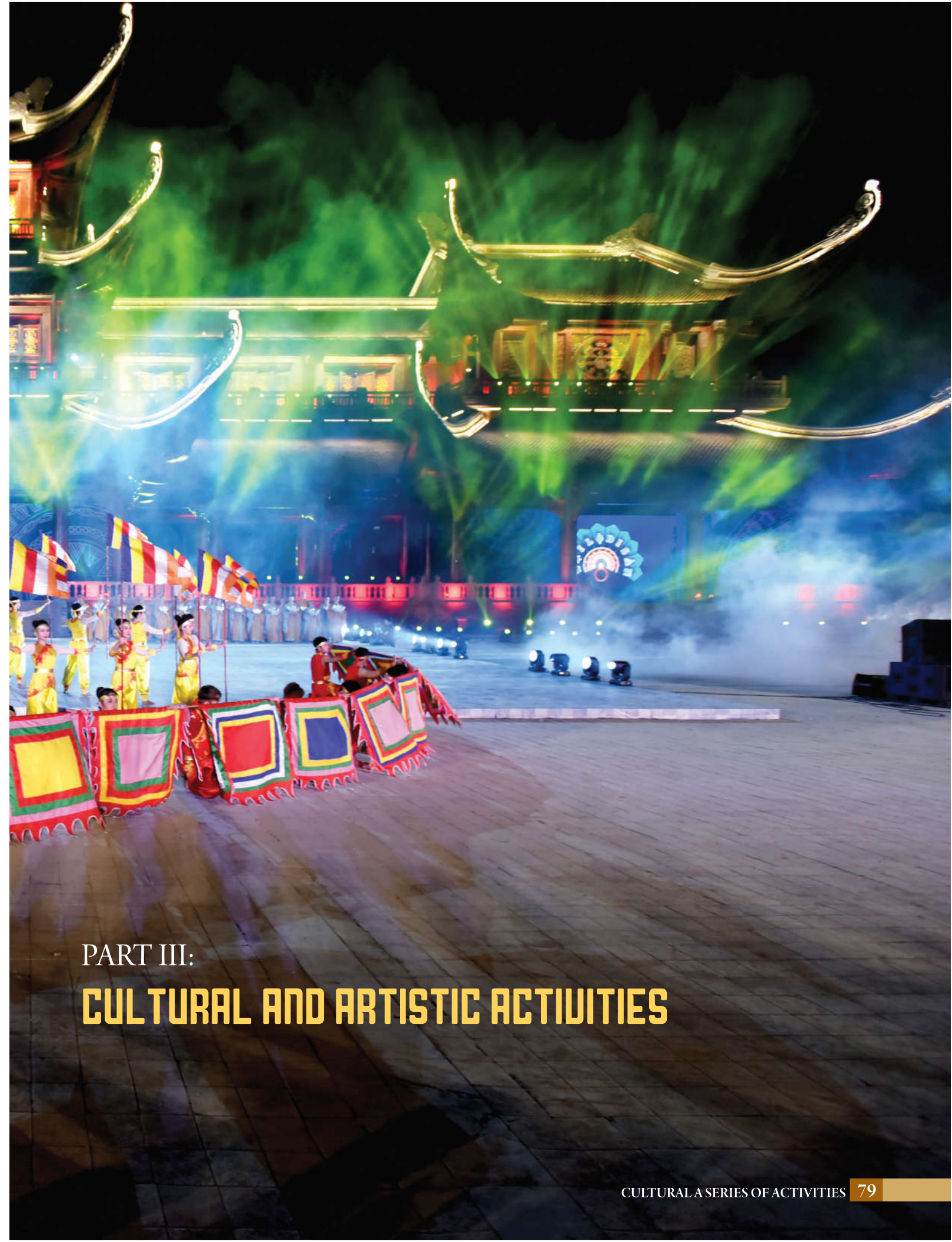
9.7. We declare that Buddhist practice at all levels, whether individual or communal, is a form of social engagement in which the wisdom of the Dharma and the practice of meditation must have practical meaning in addressing situations of suffering and injustice in politics, the environment, the economy, and society.

9.8. We encourage the expansion of Buddhist non-governmental organizations, actively participating in disaster relief efforts, social welfare, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Enacted on May 14, 2019, at the International Convention Center of Tam Chuc Pagoda, Ha Nam, Vietnam.







PART III:

CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES



International and Vietnamese delegates enjoying the Buddhist art performances. *Photo: Ngo Dung*

UN VESAK 2019: INAUGURATION OF BUDDHIST CULTURAL EVENTS



On the evening of May 10, 2019, at the Tam Chuc Buddhist Cultural Center (Kim Bang, Ha Nam), the Central Culture Committee of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) officially inaugurated the cultural event series to celebrate the United Nations Vesak Day 2019. This occasion provided an opportunity for both domestic and international Buddhists and visitors to explore and admire the profound cultural and spiritual values of Buddhism through exhibitions, artistic performances, and traditional ceremonies.

♦ **Buddhist Cultural Exhibitions: A Bridge Between Vietnam and the World**

The Vesak celebration features meaningful cultural activities, including exhibitions on Vietnamese and global Buddhist culture, displays of historical Buddhist photographs, Buddhist art exhibitions, as well as exhibitions of Buddhist stone art and cultural artifacts. These works of art not only embody spiritual values but also emphasize themes such as the lotus flower, environmental protection, and the relationship between Buddhism and everyday life. It offers a valuable opportunity for visitors to gain deeper insights into Vietnamese Buddhist culture in the context of international integration.

♦ **Lighting the Seven Lotus Flowers: A Sacred Symbol of Vesak 2019**

One of the most special rituals of Vesak 2019 is the lighting of seven lotus flowers on Tam Chuc Lake. These flowers symbolize the seven pure steps taken by the Buddha when he appeared in the world, carrying a message of peace, tranquility, and

happiness for humanity. Each lotus flower, crafted from stainless steel and fabric, spans 11 meters in diameter and stands nearly 5 meters high, creating a shimmering, sacred scene against the backdrop of Tam Chuc's majestic natural setting.

♦ **International Art Performances: A Cultural Exchange of Global Buddhism**

As part of the Vesak festivities, an international art performance will take place on the evening of May 12, drawing widespread attention from both attendees and the public. The performance is divided into two parts: "Sacred Vesak" and "Boulevard of Heritage." This large-scale artistic showcase serves as a cultural exchange, where artists from countries with deep Buddhist traditions display their unique cultural heritage through refined and captivating performances.

♦ **Cultural Events: Spreading a Message of Peace**

The Vesak 2019 cultural events not only celebrate the values of Buddhism but also serve as a bridge for cultural exchange among nations. Through exhibitions and traditional ceremonies, Vesak 2019 spreads the spirit of Buddhist compassion and harmony across the globe, contributing to the strengthening of international unity and promoting the image of Vietnam and its people.

With meticulous planning and dedication, the cultural events at Vesak 2019 promise to leave a lasting impression, affirming the stature and significance of Vietnamese Buddhism within the global Buddhist community.



Photo: Ngo Dung



Photo: Ngo Dung

EXHIBITION OF VIETNAMESE BUDDHISM AT VESAK 2019: HONORING THE SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Within the framework of the 16th United Nations Day of Vesak 2019, held at the Tam Chuc Buddhist Cultural Center (Ha Nam), the exhibition of the Vietnam News Agency drew significant attention from visitors and Buddhist followers. Featuring 45 valuable documentary photographs, the exhibition not only celebrated the cultural essence of Buddhism but also deeply depicted the Vietnamese Buddhist landscape throughout previous Vesak events, along with the beauty of temples across the nation and abroad.

♦ Vietnamese Buddhism Through the Lens of Documentary Photography

Organized by the Vietnam News Agency, the exhibition vividly captured various aspects of Vietnamese Buddhism, from ancient and sacred temples to significant Buddhist events. Particularly notable were the captivating images from previous international Vesak celebrations. The 45 photographs offered an authentic reflection of the cultural, historical, and spiritual values of Vietnamese Buddhism, contributing to the promotion of its image not only domestically but also internationally.

♦ **Diverse and Rich in Themes**

The exhibition's photos covered a wide range of themes, including famous Vietnamese temples across the country, Vietnamese temples abroad, and major Buddhist festivals. Especially remarkable were the valuable documentary images from previous Vesak celebrations, showcasing diversity and richness that attracted the attention of numerous visitors, monks, nuns, and Buddhists from various regions.

Contributing to the Success of Vesak 2019

Through this exhibition, the Vietnam News Agency played a vital role in the success of Vesak 2019, reaffirming the position of Vietnamese Buddhism on the global stage. The event provided a comprehensive view of Buddhist culture and served as a valuable opportunity to promote the image of Vietnam and its people. These contributions helped make Vesak 2019 a pivotal diplomatic event for the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and the nation in 2019.

♦ **Vietnamese Buddhism – A National Pride**

The exhibition helped spread the core values of Buddhism, asserting the position of Vietnamese Buddhism in the global spiritual and cultural flow. Not only a religious event, Vesak and the exhibition became a bridge connecting Vietnam with the international community, leaving an indelible mark of compassion, peace, and unity.





cầu nguyện

Thiền Môn (Theravada sect of Kinh people)
y, Dong Nai province, Southern of Vietnam

Photo: Ngo Dung



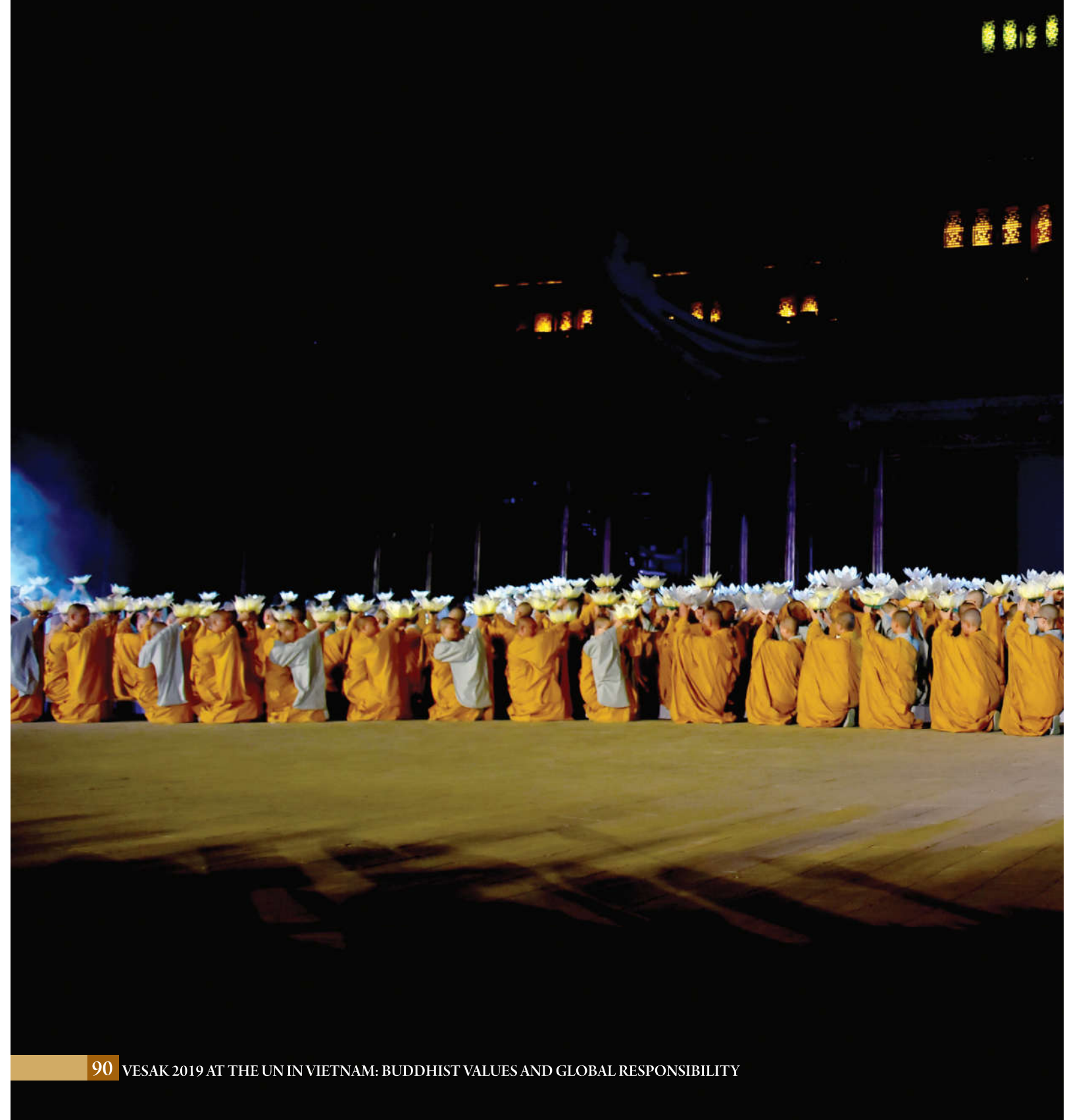


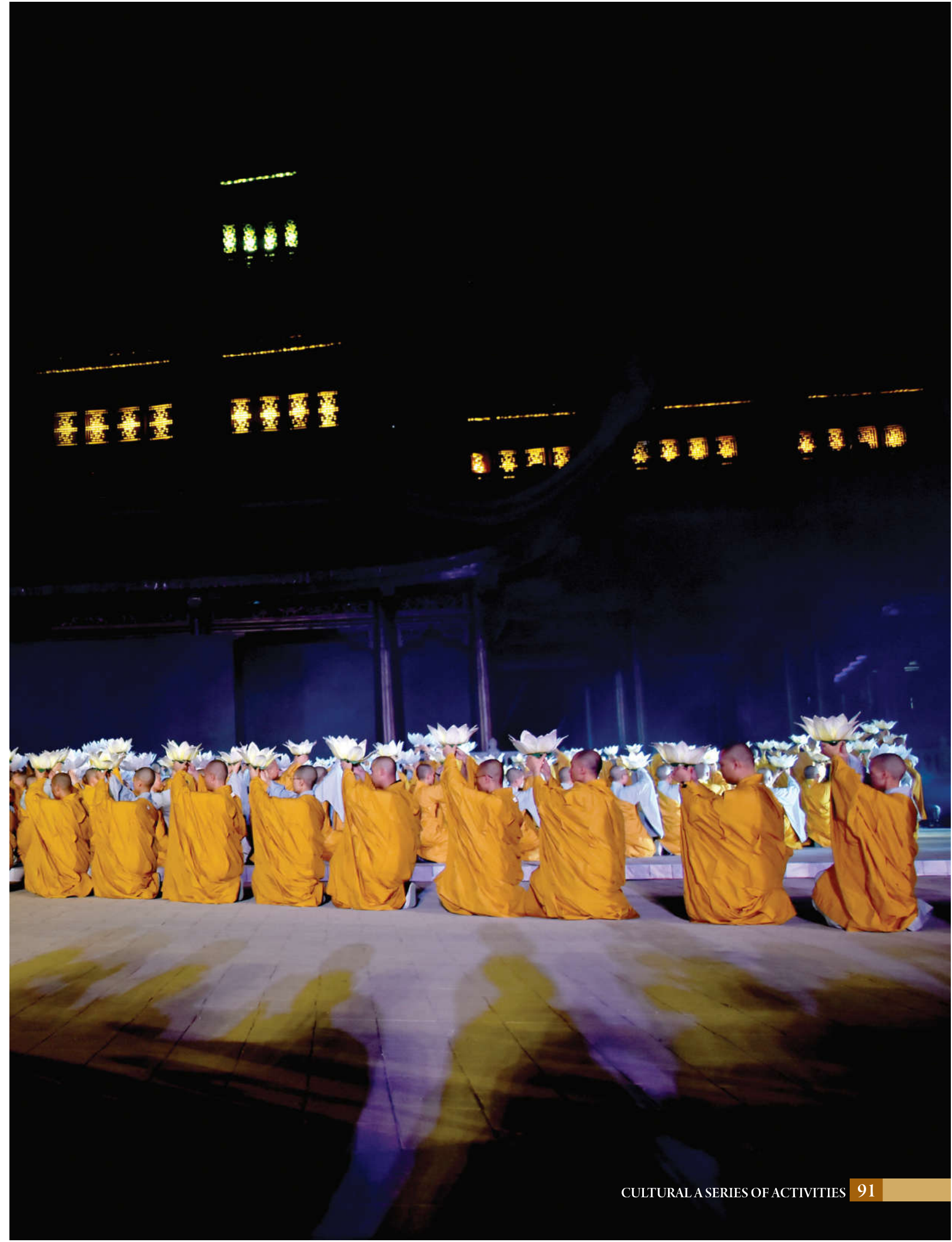
Photo: Ngo Dung



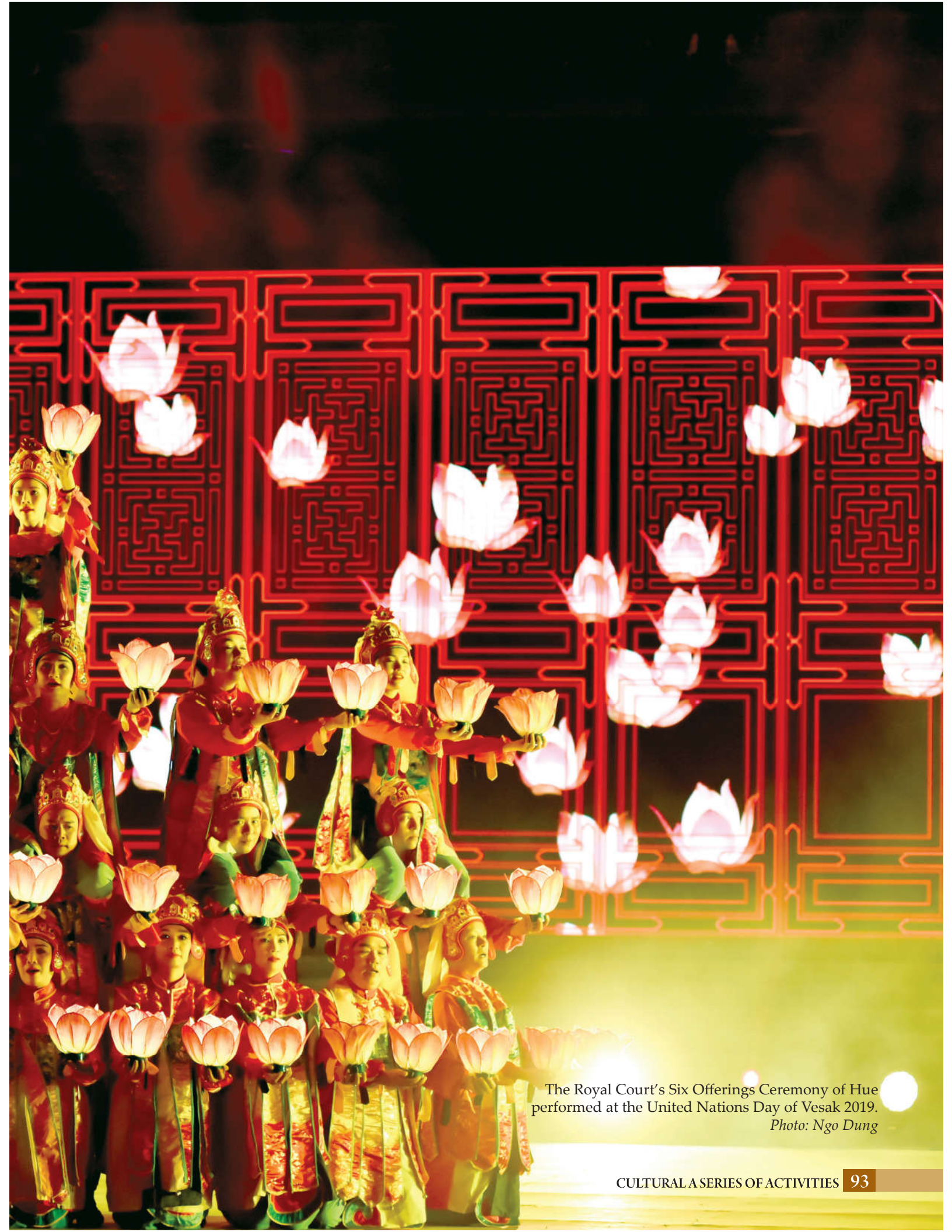
Photo: Ngo Dung

“HERITAGE AVENUE” – A FUSION OF ART AND BUDDHIST CULTURE AT THE 2019 UN VESAK









The Royal Court's Six Offerings Ceremony of Hue performed at the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019.
Photo: Ngo Dung



A Buddhist art performance at the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019. *Photo: Ngo Dung*

On the evening of May 12, 2019, at the Tam Quan Gate of Tam Chuc Pagoda (Ha Nam), the special artistic program “Heritage Avenue” unfolded, bringing a vibrant and colorful artistic space that honored the cultural heritage of Buddhism. This remarkable program left a lasting impression on thousands of delegates and international audiences attending the 2019 UN Vesak celebration. With its grand stage and outstanding performances from international and Vietnamese art troupes, “Heritage Avenue” marked a profound highlight

in the Vesak celebration.

♦ **The Largest Realistic Stage in Vesak History**

One of the most striking features of “Heritage Avenue” was the seamless blend of live performances and the majestic natural backdrop of Tam Chuc Pagoda. This marked the largest realistic stage ever held in Vesak history. The program featured performances by eight art troupes from Asian countries with long-standing Buddhist cultural traditions, alongside 300 monks and nuns, and 120 Vietnamese performers. This unique performance



space connected diverse cultures while celebrating Buddhist artistic heritage.

♦ **Vietnam's Cultural Heritage – The Offering of Lanterns Dance**

Among the standout performances was the “Offering of Lanterns,” a court dance dating back to the Nguyen Dynasty, preserved as a precious gem in Vietnam’s cultural and artistic legacy. With graceful movements, the dance evoked pride in Vietnam’s traditional culture, while recalling a glorious historical era.

♦ **International Performances Infused with Cultural Significance**

In addition to Vietnam’s performances, “Heritage Avenue” showcased a series of performances from various countries, each embodying a unique cultural identity and Buddhist spirit. Thailand’s Ministry of Culture presented “The Defeat of Mara,” a powerful depiction of the inner battle between good and evil. Japan’s Awa Odori dance, blending the rhythms of the samisen, drums, bells, and flutes, exemplified the samurai spirit. India’s Odissi dance, one of the country’s seven classical dances, brought the audience a glimpse of India’s rich cultural heritage. Bhutan’s sacred Cham dance, deeply rooted in the country’s Buddhist traditions, mesmerized the audience with its mysterious and solemn rituals.

♦ **A Global Cultural Exchange of Buddhist Art**

“Heritage Avenue” not only celebrated Buddhist artistic values but also served as a cultural bridge linking Buddhist-influenced nations across the globe. Indonesia’s Onden Onden dance, China’s traditional Suo Nan Zhi performance, and Sri Lanka’s classical dances enriched the diverse cultural tapestry at Vesak 2019, each contributing its own distinct artistic flavor.

♦ **An Enchanting Stage Lit by Flashlights**

A memorable moment of the evening came when the audience collectively turned on their phone flashlights, creating a magical and ethereal atmosphere at the Tam Quan Gate. Thousands of twinkling lights blended harmoniously with the music and dance, invoking a sense of serenity and spiritual peace for everyone present at the event.

♦ **Spreading Cultural Values and Peace**

“Heritage Avenue” was more than just an art performance—it conveyed a message of harmony and cultural connection among Buddhist nations worldwide. Through this program, the organizers successfully promoted Vietnam’s artistic heritage while facilitating cultural exchanges with other countries. This event was part of a series of activities aiming to honor the values of humanity and global peace that the 2019 UN Vesak celebration sought to impart.

♦ **Conclusion**

With its stellar performances and impressive artistic space, “Heritage Avenue” emerged as a shining highlight of the 2019 UN Vesak celebration. The program not only captivated the audience but also stirred deep reverence for the Buddha, spreading the Buddhist virtues of compassion, wisdom, and peace to the international community.



Photo: Ngo Dung





CULTURAL PERFORMANCES CELEBRATE VESAK 2019: SPREADING THE SPIRIT OF BUDDHISM THROUGH MELODIES

On the evening of April 28, 2019, the second preliminary round of the Buddhist cultural performance competition took place at Phổ Quang Pagoda in Tân Bình District, Ho Chi Minh City. Organized by the Cultural Committee of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) of Ho Chi Minh City, the event honored the spiritual and cultural values of Buddhism in celebration of the 2563rd Buddha's Birthday and the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019. Nearly 20 outstanding performances showcased artistic excellence and spiritual devotion.

♦ Impressive and Well-Prepared Performances

While none of the performances achieved a perfect score (20/20), the judges recognized several high-quality presentations that advanced to the final round. Venerable Nguyễn Phú Trọng Trí Chon, Deputy Head of the Central Cultural Committee and Head of the VBS Cultural Committee of Ho Chi Minh City, commended the meticulous preparation and professional level of the performances.

He also emphasized the enthusiastic participation of Buddhist administrative boards and Buddhist families from various districts, affirming that the competition was an opportunity for Buddhists to express their love and reverence for the Buddha.

♦ Professionalism and Diversity in the Competition

This year's theme, "Sacred Lotus," inspired heartfelt and artistically refined performances. Venerable Nguyễn Phú Trọng Đạt Đức, Permanent Deputy Head of the VBS Cultural Committee and Chief Judge remarked, "The number of entries this year far exceeds previous years, reflecting the deep engagement of the community. Each performance is not just a showcase but a merit offering to the Buddha."

♦ Looking Forward to the "Sacred Lotus" Concert – Competition Finals

After the preliminary rounds, the organizing committee will select the 10 best performances to be featured in the "Sacred Lotus" concert, scheduled for May 16 at Việt Nam Quốc Tự Pagoda (District 10, Ho Chi Minh City). This event will also serve as the final round, where the best performances will be awarded. The concert is a meaningful cultural event to celebrate Vesak 2019 and provide a vibrant artistic platform for the Buddhist community.

♦ The Competition: Connecting Buddhist Culture with Community Life

This year's competition not only provided a stage for Buddhists to showcase their artistic talents but also offered a chance to spread the compassion and wisdom of Buddhism to the wider public. Each performance carried profound Buddhist symbolism, contributing to a sacred and harmonious atmosphere for this important celebration.



Photo: Giac Ngo online

LỄ PHÁT HÀNH ĐẶC BIỆT BỘ TEM BƯU CHÍNH
SPECIAL ISSUE OF THE STAMP SET
CHÀO MỪNG ĐẠI LỄ PHẬT ĐẢN LIÊN HỢP QUỐC - VESAK 2019
THE UNITED NATIONS DAY OF VESAK 2019
(PHẬT LỊCH 2563 - DƯƠNG LỊCH 2019)

Hà Nam, ngày 11 tháng 5 năm 2019



Photo: Ngo Dung

SPECIAL STAMP COLLECTION LAUNCHED TO CELEBRATE VESAK 2019: HONORING VIETNAM'S BUDDHIST HERITAGE

On May 11, 2019, at the Tam Chuc International Buddhist Cultural Center in Ha Nam province, the Ministry of Information and Communications, in collaboration with the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha Central Committee, officially launched a special stamp collection to celebrate the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019. This event was a significant part of the activities aimed at honoring Vietnamese Buddhism during the 16th Vesak celebration in Vietnam.

♦ Vesak 2019 Stamp Launch: A Fusion of Buddhism and National Culture

Minister of Information and Communications Nguyen Manh Hung, His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon—Chairman of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha Central Committee and Head of the Vesak 2019 Organizing Committee—and Nguyễn Xuân Đông, Chairman of Ha Nam Provincial People's Committee, signed and unveiled the special Vesak stamp collection. The launch ceremony also witnessed the presence of Most Venerable Professor Dr. Phra Brahmapundit, Chairman of the International



Minister of Information and Communications Nguyen Manh Hung and His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon, Chairman of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, unveiling the United Nations Day of Vesak 2019 commemorative stamp. *Photo: Ngo Dung*

Organizing Committee for Vesak, adding to the solemnity and significance of the event.

The stamp collection, issued by the Vietnam Post and the Vietnam Stamp Corporation, features a majestic Buddha statue, with a Bodhi leaf symbolizing enlightenment radiating light, bringing peace and happiness to humanity. The design also includes the image of Tam Chuc Pagoda—where Vesak 2019 is being held—combined with the iconic dragon of the Ly Dynasty, a period known for the flourishing of Buddhism in Vietnam. Below, the lotus and clouds represent the harmony between heaven and earth, offering tranquility and serenity.

♦ Message of the Stamp: Accompanying National Development

The Vesak 2019 stamp collection is not just a postal product; it carries a profound message of the enduring connection between Buddhist tradition and the Vietnamese people, who have shared this bond for millennia. The images on the stamp reaffirm that Buddhism has always walked hand in

hand with the nation, contributing to the building of a prosperous, peaceful, and globally integrated Vietnam.

The stamp is priced at 4,000 VND and will be available on the public postal network from May 11, 2019, to December 31, 2020.

♦ Launch of Buddhist Social Network: Connecting the Global Buddhist Community

On this occasion, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha also launched a Buddhist social network under the domain butta.vn. This online platform serves as a space for Buddhists both within and outside Vietnam to connect, exchange knowledge, share Buddhist teachings, and build a strong global Buddhist community in the digital age.

The launch of this social network not only emphasizes the promotion of Buddhist spiritual values but also marks a strategic step for Vietnamese Buddhism to embrace and adapt to modern technological trends while advancing the dissemination of the Dharma and strengthening the global Buddhist connection.



UN VESAK VIETNAM 2019 LANTERN FESTIVAL: **SPREADING THE LIGHT OF PEACE AND COMPASSION**



♦ **A Celebration Honoring the Spirit of Buddhism**

On the evening of May 13, 2019, as part of the activities of the United Nations Day of Vesak (UNDV) 2019, a grand lantern festival was held at the Kinh Column Square, Avalokiteśvara Hall, Tam Chuc Temple (Ba Sao Town, Kim Bảng District, Ha Nam). This event was a significant component of the UNDV celebrations, drawing thousands of Buddhist devotees, visitors, and international delegates from across the world.

♦ **A Grand Event with the Presence of Leaders and International Buddhist Figures**

The festival was attended by many high-ranking Vietnamese leaders, including Deputy Prime Minister Pham Binh Minh, along with provincial leaders of Ha Nam and representatives from various central government agencies. From the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS), the event

was graced by members of the Supreme Patriarch Council, the Executive Council, senior monastics, and more than 300 monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists from both Vietnam and abroad.

♦ **A Meaningful Address by Deputy Prime Minister Pham Binh Minh**

In his address at the ceremony, Deputy Prime Minister Pham Binh Minh emphasized the significance of UNDV 2019 in honoring the noble values of Buddhism. He expressed pride in Vietnam's role as the host of this important event, which not only fostered knowledge exchange and loving-kindness but also cultivated a culture of peace for all humanity. He further urged the Buddhist community and the Vietnamese people to uphold the essence of Buddhism and contribute to building a peaceful and sustainable nation.

♦ **The Radiance of Peace Shining from the Floating Lanterns**

A highlight of the festival was the ritual of releasing over 40,000 lanterns onto Tam Chuc Lake. These flickering candles, floating gently on the water, created an enchanting spectacle while carrying heartfelt prayers for global peace and happiness. The lantern festival symbolized the spiritual and cultural values of Buddhism, spreading a message of love and harmony.

♦ **The Festival's Enchanting Appeal to Visitors and Buddhists**

The event drew an overwhelming number of Buddhist devotees and visitors from various regions. Additionally, numerous monks, nuns, and venerable

masters from different countries and territories participated, underscoring the international nature and unity of global Buddhism. The illuminated Tam Chuc Lake, reflecting thousands of floating lanterns, created a sacred and hope-filled atmosphere.

♦ **Spiritual Connection and the Spread of Compassion**

The UNDV 2019 lantern festival was not merely a traditional ritual but also an occasion to honor Buddhist spiritual and cultural values. With thousands of lanterns illuminating the night, the event conveyed a profound message of love, peace, and compassion, reaffirming Buddhism's role in promoting harmony and fostering connections among people across the world.





Photo: Ngo Dung



10 VIETNAM RECORDS SET AT THE UNITED NATIONS DAY OF VESAK 2019

highlighted Vietnam's role in promoting world peace and elevating the image of Vietnamese Buddhism globally.

Remarkable Records at Vesak 2019

Within the framework of the event, the Vietnam Records Organization, in collaboration with the World Records Union, recognized 10 Vietnam records, including two world records. These achievements reflect the meticulous preparation and grand scale of the celebration.

1. The World's Largest Peace Prayer Platform: At Tam Chuc Pagoda, the world's largest peace prayer platform was

constructed, covering 864 square meters. Designed with five levels and standing 9 meters tall, it served as a sacred space for international delegates and Buddhists to pray for global peace. The topmost level featured a 1.8-meter-tall, 4-ton statue of Buddha.

2. The Tower of Diamond Compassion with the Most Golden Bells: The Thien Quang Pagoda in Bac Ninh set a record for its 15-story tower housing an automated system of 108 golden bells. These bells, arranged across the second to 14th floors of the tower, are a testament to the harmonious blend of Buddhist cultural values and modern technological artistry.

The 10 Vietnam Records Acknowledged

In addition to the two world records, 10 Vietnam records were set at Vesak 2019, including:



World record for the Prayer Ceremony for Peace at Vesak 2019, Tam Chuc Pagoda, Ha Nam. Photo: Yi Kang

The United Nations Day of Vesak 2019, held from May 12 to May 14 at the Tam Chuc Buddhist Cultural Center in Ha Nam, underscored the prominence of Vietnamese Buddhism on the global stage. This was the third time Vietnam had hosted this sacred event, not only a religious commemoration but also a powerful symbol of peace and international solidarity.

Vesak and the Spirit of Buddhism

Vesak, celebrates three pivotal events in the life of the Buddha: his birth, enlightenment, and entry into Nirvana. The 2019 UN Vesak Vietnam attracted over 1,600 international delegates from 115 countries and territories, including numerous heads of state, religious leaders, and representatives from major Buddhist organizations. The event



The 15-story Diamond Bodhi Tower of Saint Quang Pagoda, Bac Ninh. Photo: Vietnam Records

1. The Largest International Buddha's Birthday Celebration: With the participation of over 1,600 international delegates and more than 20,000 Vietnamese and international Buddhists, this became the largest Buddha's Birthday event ever held in Vietnam.

2. The Largest International Buddhist Conference: The conference attracted more than 10,000 participants, addressing Buddhist solutions to global challenges, including sustainable leadership and global ethical education.

3. The Largest International Buddhist Fair: Featuring over 1,000 booths, the fair showcased Buddhist cultural products and a grand vegetarian

food festival with thousands of diverse dishes.

4. The Largest Buddhist Art Exhibition: Displaying over 300 Buddhist artifacts, art pieces, and stone sculptures, the exhibition offered visitors a deeper understanding of Buddhist culture and spiritual values.

5. The Largest International Buddhist Art Performance: With performances by leading cultural troupes from India, Bhutan, Japan, Indonesia, China, and Thailand, the event, themed "Heritage Boulevard 2019," reached millions through national television.

6. The Largest Global Peace Prayer Platform: Designed with five tiers and standing 9 meters tall, the platform was the centerpiece for monks and Buddhists worldwide to pray for peace and national prosperity.

7. The Largest Buddhist Flag Made of Lanterns: Measuring 720 square meters, the flag was composed of thousands of glowing lanterns, creating a stunning visual symbol of peace and unity.

8. The Largest Gathering for the Chanting of the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: Over 25,000 people participated in chanting this important Buddhist scripture to pray for world peace, symbolizing unity and spiritual harmony.

9. The Largest Lantern-Lighting Ceremony: More than 20,000 delegates, Buddhists, and international visitors gathered to light thousands of lanterns, sending wishes of goodwill to humanity.

10. The Largest Buddha Bathing Ceremony: Over 25,000 people took part in this sacred ritual, which symbolizes the purification of the soul in Buddhist tradition.

Vesak 2019: A Source of Pride for Vietnam

The United Nations Day of Vesak 2019 was not only a major religious event but also a moment for Vietnam to assert its leadership in promoting Buddhism and advancing values of peace and humanity. This event set new benchmarks for future Vesak celebrations and left a lasting impression on international friends. Through unity and compassion, Vesak 2019 stands as a testament to the strength of Vietnamese Buddhism in fostering a peaceful and harmonious world.



The overview of the closing ceremony of the United Nations Vesak 2019 at Tam Chuc Pagoda, Ha Nam.
Photo: UNDV2019VIETNAM



Scientific Conference at Vesak 2019. *Photo: UNDV2019VIETNAM*



The exhibition space of the Buddhist Fair at Vesak 2019. Photo: Duy Khang, Vietkings



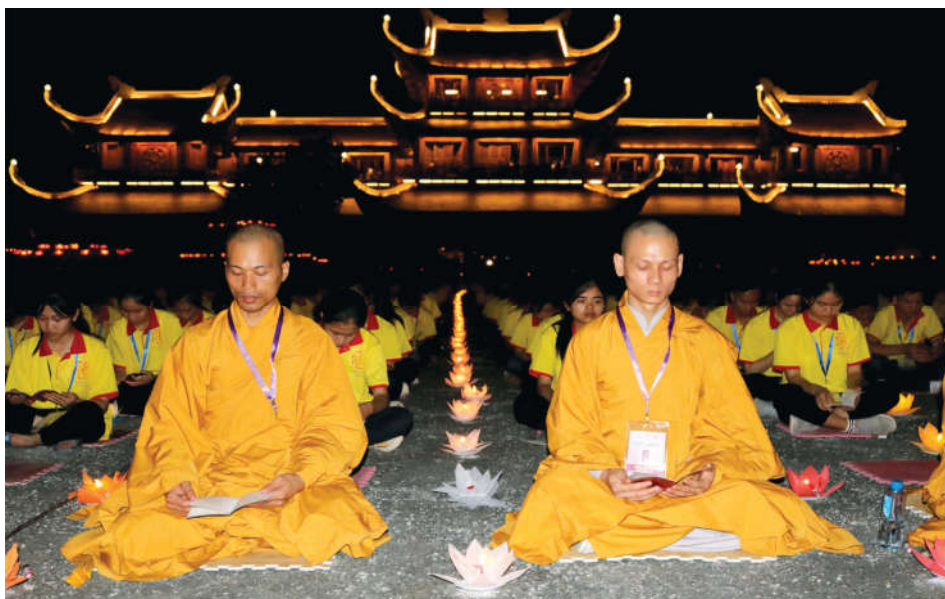
A simulation of horizontal scrolls and vertical banners of Buddhism in the courtyard of the Quan The Am Temple, Tam Chuc, Ha Nam. Photo: Duy Khang, Vietkings



The art performance program “Heritage Avenue 2019.” *Photo: Vietnam Records.*



The lanterns arranged in the shape of the Buddhist flag were lit during Vesak 2019.
Photo: Duy Khang, Vietkings



The monks and Buddhists gathered to chant the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta on the night of May 13. *Photo by Duy Khang, Vietkings*



The prayer ceremony for world peace at the Quan The Am Temple. *Photo: Duy Khang, Vietkings*



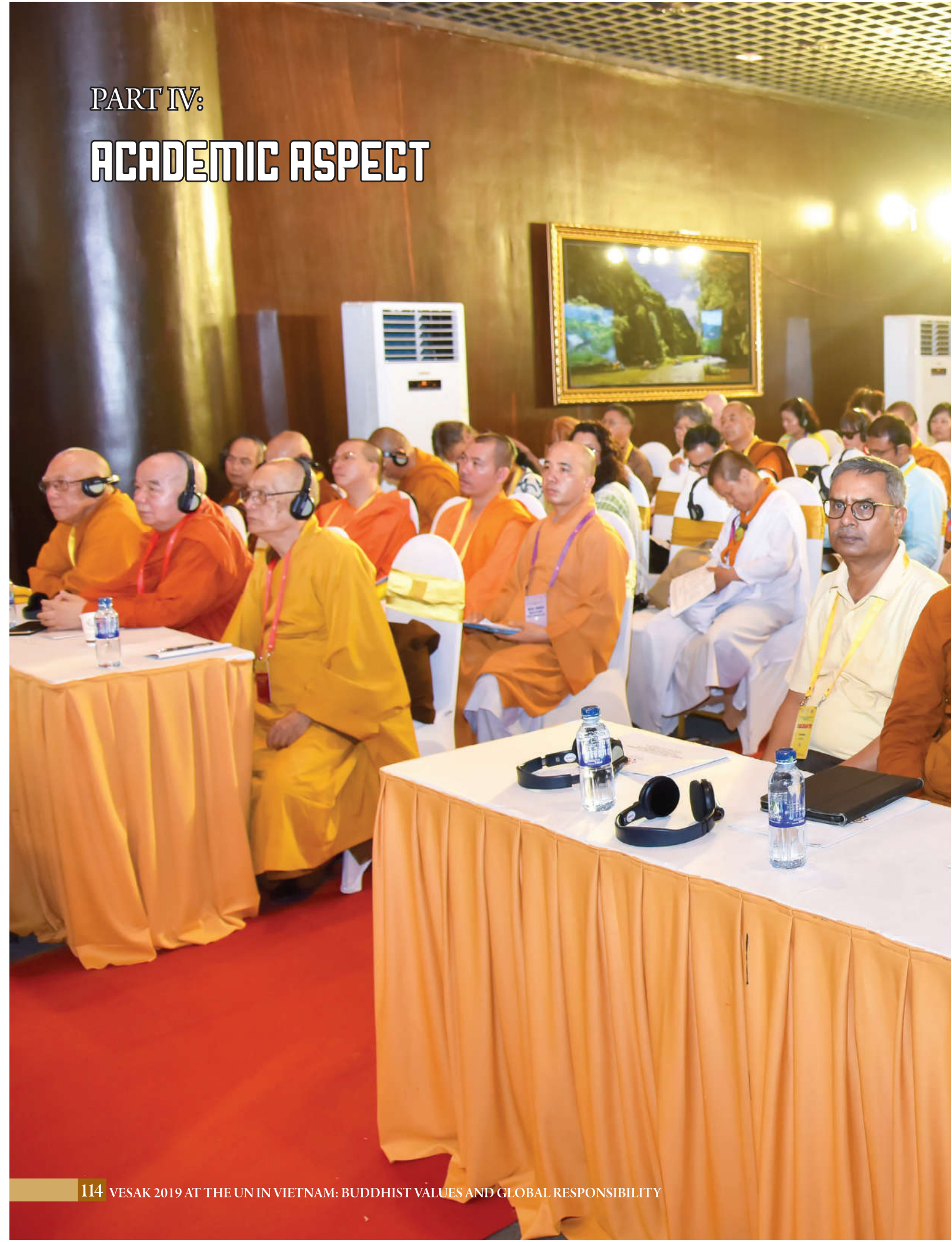
A Buddhist offers a lantern and prays on the night of May 13 during Vesak 2019. *Photo: Duy Khang, Vietkings*



Images of monks and nuns performing the Buddha bathing ceremony during the lantern lighting prayer for peace on the night of May 13 at the Quan The Am temple, Tam Chuc. *Photo: Duy Khang, Vietkings.*

PART IV:

ACADEMIC ASPECT





110/398 PAPERS TO BE PRESENTED AT VESAK 2019 CONFERENCE



Venerable Thich Nhat Tu

On May 7, 2019, GNO reported that among the 1,650 international delegates attending Vesak 2019 in Vietnam, various Buddhist leaders, scholars, and researchers would take part in the scientific forums, which are key components of this year's event.

Thich Nhat Tu, Deputy Secretary General of the Vesak National Organizing Committee, who oversees the content of these conferences, shared details with *Giao Ngo* newspaper:

- Vesak 2019 features two major conferences: the national conference (in Vietnamese) held on May 11, 2019, and the international conference (in English) on May 13, 2019.

As the coordinator for both conferences, I am responsible for collecting, translating, and organizing the publication of the academic papers. By March 10, 2019, when we stopped accepting submissions, we had received 398 papers from international delegates, each ranging from 10 to 18 A4 pages on average.

We also received submissions from 110 Vietnamese delegates, written in Vietnamese. All of these papers have been compiled into drafts for 14 English books and 16 Vietnamese books, which have already been sent to the printers. Each book is organized by theme, with each volume averaging between 400 and 600 pages.

This year's Vesak conference has the highest volume of academic papers in its history. On May 11, 2019, these books will arrive in Hanoi and be distributed to delegates.

With 1,650 international delegates, 2,000 copies of each English book will be printed—one for each international delegate, with 350 additional sets reserved for official use and commemorative purposes. For the Vietnamese books, 4,000 copies of each volume will be printed for domestic delegates.

♦ **Challenges in Translating Vesak 2019 Materials**

- We faced significant challenges in translation. In the 50 days following the submission deadline, we had to process an enormous volume of over 5,000 pages of content. While the number of international submissions was nearly four times that of domestic ones, we decided to print more Vietnamese books. This was because, in addition to the 110 domestic submissions, we selected 150 of the best international papers for translation and inclusion in the Vietnamese volumes.

This approach allows the Vietnamese community to access and understand the key issues of interest to the global Buddhist community.

Presenting at Vesak 2019: Speaker Arrangements and Interpretation Services

- Thich Nhat Tu also provided insights into the arrangements for speakers and interpreters at the upcoming forums:

- Each speaker is allotted an average of 30 minutes. Morning sessions will feature 10 speakers, while afternoon sessions will include 12.

Both the international and national conferences will host five forums each, with 110 English-language speakers and 100 Vietnamese-language speakers. Of the 398 international scholars, we have arranged for 110 to present. Deciding who gets to speak was a difficult task, as most of the papers are relevant to the forum's themes. Our solution was to ensure that scholars from as many countries as possible have the opportunity to present.

Regarding interpretation, each forum will have two primary interpreters, one from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and one monk appointed by the Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam. Additionally, depending on the specific forum, we will provide interpretation services in languages with a significant number of delegates, such as Chinese, Thai, and Sinhalese. Each forum will be equipped with five interpretation cabins, with translation available in five languages.

The Vesak 2019 conference is now fully prepared to welcome delegates, scholars, and speakers from around the world.



The scientific conference at the UN Vesak 2014 - held at Bai Dinh (Ninh Binh). Photo: B. Toan



PART IV:

EVALUATION AND SUMMARY





Delegates attending the conference. Photo: XT

SUMMARY CONFERENCE ON THE 2019 UN VESAK DAY: ACKNOWLEDGING SUCCESS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

On the afternoon of July 29, 2019, at Tam Chuc Pagoda in Ha Nam Province, the Government's Task Force in collaboration with the Ha Nam People's Committee held a conference to review the organization of the 2019 UN Vesak Day. The conference aimed to evaluate the achieved results and outline future development directions for the Vesak event location.

♦ The success of Vesak 2019: Government Acknowledgment

In his address at the conference, Permanent Deputy Prime Minister Truong Hoa Binh expressed his warm commendation and recognition of the achievements made by the ministries, agencies, local authorities, as well as the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) and Xuan Truong Enterprise, in organizing the 2019 Vesak Day. He emphasized that this event not only marked a significant milestone for Vietnamese Buddhism but also contributed to promoting the image of a peaceful and hospitable Vietnam to the international community.

♦ Recognition of Outstanding Units and Individuals

During the conference, many individuals and groups were honored for their exceptional contributions to the organization of Vesak 2019. Ministries, agencies, and local authorities were praised for their effective coordination in ensuring security, logistics, and the successful arrangement of ceremonial activities. Particularly, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and Xuan Truong Enterprise were awarded commendations from the government for their substantial efforts in constructing the Tam Chuc tourist complex and successfully hosting the event.

♦ Development Plan for the Tam Chuc Tourist Complex

On this occasion, Deputy Prime Minister Truong Hoa Binh proposed that the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism collaborate with relevant ministries and the Ha Nam People's Committee to develop a plan for the sustainable development of the Tam Chuc tourist complex, ensuring adherence

to the master plan approved by the Prime Minister. The exploitation and usage of this complex must align with the preservation of cultural and spiritual values, while also promoting sustainable tourism.

♦ **Advancing the Spirit of the Ha Nam Declaration 2019**

The Government Committee for Religious Affairs was also tasked with working closely with the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha to effectively implement the content of the Ha Nam Declaration 2019, particularly in guiding Tam Chuc Pagoda in complying with the regulations on religious activities. Additionally, the Central Propaganda Department and the Ministry of Information and Communications were instructed to strengthen communication efforts, continuing to promote the success of Vesak to monks, nuns, and Buddhists in Vietnam and abroad.

♦ **Towards Sustainable and Harmonious Development**

The 2019 Vesak Day review conference reaffirmed the success of this international event while also paving the way for future developments in the Tam Chuc area, ensuring the preservation of cultural and religious values. The event was not only a source of pride for Vietnamese Buddhism but also a clear testament to Vietnam's commitment to building a peaceful society with sustainable development and environmental friendliness.



Deputy Prime Minister Trương Hòa Bình spoke at the conference. *Photo: XT*



The delegates take a commemorative photo. *Photo: XT*

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CHAIRWOMAN CONGRATULATES VIETNAMESE BUDDHIST SANGHA

In a gesture of respect and celebration, Chairwoman of the National Assembly, Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, visited the Central Executive Council of the Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha this morning, offering flowers and her heartfelt congratulations.

This visit comes in the wake of the Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha's successful organization of the 16th United Nations Day of Vesak (2019), marking the Buddhist calendar's 2563rd year (2019 AD). At the Quán Sứ Pagoda in Hanoi, Chairwoman Ngan extended her best wishes to the Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu, the Standing Vice Chairman of the Central Executive Council.

Chairwoman Ngan commended the Sangha for its flawless execution of the grand celebration, which elevated Vietnam's image on the global stage. She conveyed her best wishes for health and peace to Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu, along with the monks, nuns, and followers of the Vietnamese Buddhist community.

She highlighted that Vesak, recognized by the UN since 1999, is not only a major religious occasion for Buddhists in Vietnam but also a cultural festival that reflects the nation's respect for religious freedom. The 2019 Vesak celebrations saw participation from over 1,600 delegates from 112 countries and territories. Major events took place at Tam Chuc Pagoda in Ha Nam province, with Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc attending the opening, Chairwoman Ngan hosting the official banquet, and Deputy Prime Minister Truong Hoa Binh delivering the closing speech.

The grand ceremony, covered widely in the media, featured memorable cultural programs and artistic performances that left a deep impression on international friends, further showcasing Vietnam's commitment to religious and spiritual freedom.

Emphasizing that this was the third successful Vesak celebration hosted by the Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha, Chairwoman Ngan applauded



Chairwoman of the National Assembly
Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan.

their leadership and operational excellence, which once again enhanced Vietnam's global standing. She reiterated Vietnam's consistent policy of respecting the freedom of belief and religion, with special recognition for Buddhism and all faiths.

The Chairwoman acknowledged the significant strides made by the Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha in recent years, praising its efforts to foster unity and harmony within the Buddhist community. She expressed confidence that the Sangha would continue to inspire its monks, nuns, and followers to uphold the country's values, abide by the policies of the Party and the laws of the state, and contribute to building a prosperous, democratic, and just society.

Most Venerable Thich Thanh Nhieu, in his response, thanked Chairwoman Ngan for her visit and highlighted the appreciation from international delegations for the government's support in making Vesak 2019 a resounding success.

On the occasion of Buddha's birthday, Chairwoman Ngan reaffirmed her belief in the Sangha's continued commitment to its noble mission, serving both the spiritual and practical needs of the people, and exemplifying the peaceful, harmonious nature of Buddhism in the hearts of Vietnamese citizens.

UN VESAK VIETNAM 2019: CONNECTING LOVE AND SPREADING THE MESSAGE OF PEACE

♦ UN Vesak Vietnam 2019: One of the Largest Global Buddhist Events

The United Nations Day of Vesak (UNDV) 2019, one of the world's most significant Buddhist events, took place from May 12 to May 14, 2019, at Tam Chuc Temple, Ha Nam Province. This was the third time Vietnam hosted the UN Vesak Vietnam celebrations, drawing thousands of delegates and tens of thousands of Buddhists from around the world. More than a religious festival, UN Vesak Vietnam 2019 provided an opportunity to foster love and share a message of peace with all of humanity.

♦ An International Gathering: UN Vesak Vietnam 2019 and Its Global Significance

With the theme *Buddhist Approach to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Sustainable Societies*, UN Vesak Vietnam 2019 welcomed over 1,650 dignitaries and religious leaders from 112 countries and territories. High-ranking leaders, including the President of Myanmar, the Prime Minister of Nepal, the Vice President of India, and the Chairman of the Bhutanese National Council, attended the opening ceremony alongside more than 20,000 domestic and international Buddhists.

During the opening ceremony, Supreme Patriarch of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, Supreme Patriarch Nguyễn Phú Trọng Phổ Tuệ, emphasized that UN Vesak Vietnam 2019 was a valuable opportunity to promote the fundamental teachings of the Buddha, including wisdom, compassion, and non-violence. With over 2,000 years of history, Vietnamese Buddhism has been a steadfast ideological foundation accompanying the nation through various historical periods.

♦ A Spiritual and Cultural Event Beyond a Religious Festival

Unlike previous Vesak celebrations that focused primarily on conferences and forums, UN Vesak Vietnam 2019 expanded its scale with a diverse array of cultural and spiritual activities, including a national peace prayer ceremony, a lantern festival for world

peace, and a grand fireworks display. These events not only carried religious significance but also captivated tens of thousands of people, transforming Vesak into a major cultural festival that conveyed messages of peace and unity.

♦ Buddhism's Message in Addressing Global Challenges

His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon, President of the Executive Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, highlighted at UN Vesak Vietnam 2019 that the world is facing numerous pressing challenges, such as conflicts, environmental crises, social inequalities, and the disruptive impacts of technological advancements. He urged the global Buddhist community to unite and uphold Buddhism's core values—tolerance, compassion, and selflessness—to help address these global issues.

As part of UN Vesak Vietnam 2019, various conferences were held on profound themes, including Buddhist approaches to education, harmonious family life, responsible consumption, and sustainable development in the era of Industry 4.0. These sessions provided religious leaders and scholars an opportunity to discuss and share solutions for building a more peaceful and prosperous world.

♦ Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc: "Beyond a Religious Festival"

Speaking at the opening ceremony of UN Vesak Vietnam 2019, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc affirmed that Vesak is more than a religious festival—it is an opportunity to celebrate the quintessence of Buddhism and spread the Buddha's message of peace, tolerance, and compassion. He emphasized that in today's world, where people are suffering from wars, natural disasters, and climate change, the need to rediscover Buddhism's humanistic values is more urgent than ever.

The Prime Minister urged, "Let us take a moment to reflect on the Buddha's teachings to find solutions and take collective action to protect and build a more peaceful world."

♦ **UN Vesak Vietnam 2019 – Contributing to Sustainable Development**

Beyond being a major religious event, UN Vesak Vietnam 2019 reaffirmed the Vietnamese government's recognition of Buddhism's cultural and ethical values, aligning with the Vietnamese people's moral and spiritual aspirations. With over 398 research papers from international scholars and 110 from domestic researchers, UN Vesak Vietnam 2019 created a platform for Buddhist studies and academic exchange.

During the three-day event, the Organizing Committee provided 40,000 vegetarian meals daily to attendees, supported by 7,000 volunteers from across the country. Additionally, more than 30 Buddhist books in English and bilingual English-Vietnamese editions were published and distributed, further promoting Buddhist values worldwide.

♦ **Fostering Love and Building a Sustainable Society**

The United Nations Day of Vesak 2019 was not only an occasion to honor the Buddha and his teachings but also an opportunity for leaders, scholars, and Buddhists worldwide to engage in discussions and propose solutions for contemporary challenges. UN Vesak Vietnam 2019 served as a heartfelt invitation to unite in love and take action toward a peaceful, just, and sustainable world—embodying the very principles that Buddhism has always upheld.



VESAK 2019: AN INTERNATIONAL EVENT HONORING THE HUMANITARIAN VALUES OF BUDDHISM



With the theme “*Buddhist Approach to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibility for Sustainable Societies*,” the 2019 United Nations Day of Vesak took place from May 12-14, 2019, at the Tam Chuc Buddhist Cultural Center in Ha Nam. This was the third time the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha hosted this international-scale event, affirming Vietnam’s significant role and position within the global community.

♦ **Affirming Vietnam’s Role in the International Community**

The organization of Vesak is not only an opportunity to honor the humanitarian and ethical values of Buddhism but also a platform to underscore Vietnam’s substantial contributions to the United Nations activities. Since 1999, the United Nations has designated the Full Moon of May as International Vesak Day, celebrating three significant events in the life of the Buddha: his birth, enlightenment, and passing into Nirvana.

By hosting Vesak and welcoming thousands of international delegates, Vietnam demonstrates its commitment to peace and friendship, serving as a testament to the maturity of Vietnamese Buddhism in the process of global integration.

♦ **The Scale and Significance of Vesak 2019**

Vesak 2019 attracted over 1,650 international delegates from 112 countries and territories, along with tens of thousands of Vietnamese Buddhists and citizens. Key world leaders, such as the President of Myanmar, the Prime Minister of Nepal, and the Speaker of Bhutan’s Upper House, participated and delivered speeches, emphasizing Vesak’s importance in fostering international cooperation. Compared to the previous two occasions in 2008 and 2014, Vesak 2019 featured a broader range of activities, from Buddhist forums to cultural and spiritual ceremonies.

♦ **Buddhism and the Mission of Building Sustainable Societies**

With its meaningful theme, Vesak 2019 focused on Buddhism’s role in addressing global challenges such as climate change, social inequality, and sustainable development. Most Venerable Thich Thien Nhon, President of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, highlighted, “Buddhism is not only a religion of peace but also carries the responsibility of contributing to conflict resolution and fostering social harmony.”

The thematic forums at Vesak addressed urgent global issues, including education, harmonious family life, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and responsible consumption. Through these discussions, Buddhism

not only showcased its high spiritual value but also demonstrated its potential to offer practical solutions to contemporary societal challenges.

♦ **Vesak 2019: A Cultural Bridge and Spiritual Tourism Hub**

Vesak 2019 also served as a major opportunity to promote Vietnam’s image as a peaceful, culturally rich, and welcoming country. The Tam Chuc Spiritual Tourism Complex, the focal point of international attention during the event, spans 5,000 hectares and is surrounded by stunning landscapes, earning it the title “Ha Long Bay on land.”

More than just a venue, Tam Chuc is a cultural heritage site featuring thousands of stone carvings depicting the life of the Buddha and a colossal garden of stone pillars, set to become one of the



world's largest pillar gardens upon completion. Vesak 2019 not only promoted Vietnam's spiritual tourism but also linked together various Buddhist cultural heritage sites such as Huong Pagoda, Bai Dinh, and Yen Tu.

♦ **Meticulous Preparations for Vesak 2019's Success**

Through close coordination between the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and government agencies, Vesak 2019 was meticulously prepared in all aspects. Large logistical areas were established to serve delegates with safe and hygienic vegetarian meals. Stringent security and fire safety measures were implemented with the involvement of law enforcement from the Ministry of Public Security and provincial police.

♦ **Connecting Heritage, Promoting Sustainable Development**

Vesak 2019 was not only a major religious event but also a cultural bridge that fostered international cooperation and contributed to the sustainable development of society. As Thich Duc Thien, Deputy President of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, stated, "The successful organization of Vesak affirms that Vietnamese Buddhism, with its long history, is deeply intertwined with social life, contributing to national development and protection."

The 2019 Vesak Celebration in Vietnam was a resounding success, bringing pride to Vietnamese Buddhism while affirming the country's global standing. It clearly demonstrated Vietnam's commitment to peace and sustainable development on the international stage.



VESAK 2019: A GLOBAL EVENT AND A BUDDHIST MESSAGE OF UNITY

The 2019 United Nations Day of Vesak became not only an occasion to honor the Buddha but also a platform for uniting the global Buddhist community. Held at Tam Chuc, Ha Nam, from May 12 to 14, 2019, the event gathered 1,650 international delegates from 112 countries and territories. It was a moment for thousands of Vietnamese and international Buddhists to come together, creating a harmonious atmosphere that radiated the Buddhist spirit of peace and compassion.

♦ International Praise for Vesak 2019

The event received high praise from global Buddhist leaders. Venerable Prof. Dr. Phra Brahmapundit, Founding Chair of the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV), emphasized that Vesak serves as a forum for connecting the global Buddhist community under the auspices of the United Nations. He expressed his admiration for Vietnam's organizational efforts, noting that



Most Ven. Prof. Phra Brahmapundit.

Photo: Giac Ngo Newspaper

the event successfully fostered connections and understanding between Buddhist communities, advancing peace and stability in the digital age.

♦ Vesak 2019 and Its Scholarly Significance

Ven. Dr. Tampalawela Dhammaratana, Director of the International Buddhist Research Institute in Paris, described Vesak 2019 as a testament to the global Buddhist community's interest in the theme of global leadership and shared responsibility for sustainable societies. With hundreds of scholarly presentations, Vesak was not only a venue for intellectual exchange but also an opportunity for Buddhist leaders to propose practical solutions to pressing global challenges.

♦ Global Vision and the Duty to Spread Buddhist Teachings

Ven. Dr. Chao Chu, President of the Buddhist



Ven. Dr. Tampalawela Dhammaratana.

Photo: Giac Ngo Newspaper



Most Ven. Dr. Chao Chu. Photo: Giac Ngo Newspaper

Union of Los Angeles, was deeply impressed by Vietnam's progress in organizing the event. He highlighted that Vesak's success in Vietnam was the result of a seamless collaboration between government bodies, the Buddhist Church, and the broader community, especially the contributions of younger monks and nuns. He suggested that Vesak 2019 offered valuable lessons for other countries hosting future Vesak celebrations.

♦ **A Success Story for Vietnamese Buddhism Through International Eyes**

Ven. Prof. Dr. Jinwol Lee, Abbot of Daegaksa Monastery in Korea, remarked that Vesak 2019 was not only a successful event but also an inspiration for the Asian Buddhist community.

He commended the dedicated support of the Vietnamese government and Buddhist community in realizing a memorable Vesak, affirming that the event spread the Buddhist spirit of fostering a peaceful and prosperous society.

♦ **Strengthening Connections and Elevating Buddhist Values at Vesak 2019**

Delegates such as Ven. Buddharakkhita from Uganda and Ven. Pannabodhi from Congo expressed their deep gratitude for the opportunity to attend Vesak 2019, where they connected with the global Buddhist community and learned invaluable lessons. For them, Vesak was more than a religious festival—it was a chance to disseminate and preserve the Buddha's wisdom and compassion, strengthening their



Ven. Prof. Dr. Jinwol Lee. Photo: Giac Ngo Newspaper

resolve in spreading the Dharma in distant lands like Uganda and Congo.

♦ **Vietnam: A Shining Beacon of Global Buddhism**

The 2019 United Nations Day of Vesak was not only a triumph in terms of organization but also marked a significant milestone for Vietnam on the international stage. Praised by international delegates, the event helped promote the image of Vietnamese Buddhism and underscored the country's leading role in spreading the Buddha's message of peace and wisdom. Vesak 2019 stands as a source of pride for Vietnam, embodying the enduring strength of Buddhism in a rapidly evolving world.



Ven. Buddharakkhita. Photo: Giac Ngo Newspaper

