

# THE SECRETARY-GENERAL - REMARKS ON THE DAY OF VESAK

*New York, 1 May 2018*

[as delivered]

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear guests and friends,

I am pleased to join you in celebrating Vesak, a day that is sacred for millions of Buddhists around the world.

As the President of the General Assembly just mentioned, we mark the birth, enlightenment and passing of the Buddha. And on this occasion, Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike can reflect on his life and draw inspiration from his teachings.

Born a prince, he rose above self-interest and went into the world to help overcome human suffering. His teachings are based on the principle that compassion is central to enlightenment.

And as such, his message of service to others is more relevant than ever.

The world faces numerous challenges, from conflict to climate change, from prejudice to growing inequality.

We see people turning inwards.

And we see a crisis of solidarity.

The Buddha's teachings can inspire us to become global citizens. And the focus in Buddhism on the inherent dignity of life finds resonance today in our 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Buddhist world view teaches us to see ourselves as a part of this world and not as its masters. And Buddhism's emphasis on non-violence stands as a powerful call for peace.

From peace, to climate change, to human rights, we see how much the teachings of the Buddha are so relevant in the work of the United Nations today.

Now more than ever, Buddhist communities and all of us must give every day meaning to the Buddha's message of tolerance, empathy and humanism.

We must resist those who seek to twist a call for love into a cry for hate.

And on this Day of Vesak, let us renew our commitment to bridge differences, care for the most vulnerable and truly leave no one behind as we navigate the path to a better future for all.

Thank you.