Geneva, May 8, 2017

Dear Buddhist Friends,

On the auspicious occasion of Vesakh let me offer you greetings of peace and good will on behalf of the World Council of Churches!

The day of Vesakh which reminds us of the life and legacy of Gautama Buddha is also a strong reminder of our common responsibility to overcome suffering. The values of wisdom (prajna) and compassion (karuna), so central to the Buddha’s teachings, hold much relevance to a world rent apart by religious violence, ecological violation and economic exploitation. This bringing together of deep discernment and deep compassion offers a ray of hope and healing in a world gripped by hate and hurt today.

The World Council of Churches cherishes its longstanding relationship with our Buddhist partners and recognizes this relationship as a valuable and viable platform for building peace and justice in the world today. By virtue of being bound by a common humanity and sharing a common home - the earth - we are also drawn into a common responsibility, which ensures the wholeness and flourishing of the entire creation. As the statement of the recent Buddhist-Christian dialogue in held in Myanmar in January 2017 reiterated - we need to recognize that our shared humanity is both “a response to suffering and an impetus for solidarity and social action”. There is a lot that we as people of faith and goodwill can achieve together if we join hands and walk a pilgrimage of justice and peace together.

The World Council of Churches is committed to working towards a world of sustainable peace, stability, and justice in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration. We firmly
believe that mutual learning carried out in a spirit of humility, strengthening of trust carried out through honesty, and cultivation of respect carried in a spirit of hospitality are key to interreligious solidarity. We are committed to this spirit of humility, honesty and hospitality. In a world where the fear of the other seems to be on the rise posing threats for hospitable and harmonious living we draw confidence and courage from depths of our religious traditions reminding ourselves that hatred is never appeased by hatred (Dhammapada) and that we need to become neighbors to the other (the Gospel of Luke). In this spirit of neighbourliness and in our steadfast commitment to developing our interreligious relations I offer you my sincere greetings for a meaningful Vesakh!

With every blessing

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
General Secretary