



## General Secretariat

Geneva, May 25, 2021

### World Council of Churches (WCC) Acting General Secretary's Vesak Message

Dear Buddhist friends,

I send you my cordial greetings and best wishes as you observe the festival of Vesak. May the values of compassion, loving kindness, empathy and equanimity taught by Gautama Buddha, whose birth, enlightenment and death you commemorate on this auspicious occasion, continue to inspire and guide you during this time of pandemic. We are living in an unprecedented time of uncertainty and widespread suffering due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen the surge of new waves of infection in many parts of the world. At the same time in other contexts, we have seen hopeful signs of the stable delivery of effective vaccination programmes. Questions regarding the end of this pandemic and return to earlier familiar patterns of living remain pressing for many, especially those whose lives and livelihoods have been adversely affected by the pandemic.

At a time such as this faith communities have a particular role to inject a new hope into our pandemic-ravaged world. Recognising this the World Council of Churches produced a document on *Serving a Wounded World in Interreligious Solidarity* in collaboration with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. The document recognises the role of interreligious solidarity in enhancing mutual trust and understanding between faith communities and enabling them to work together to heal a wounded world, providing hope by acts of love and compassion carried out in interreligious solidarity.

I was particularly touched by a response to this document by one of our key Buddhist partners who said, "The Coronavirus pandemic has taught us that we can no more struggle for our own survival as Buddhists or Christians... We can no longer remain self-centred. The deep material, spiritual and psychological challenges that this pandemic poses invites religious communities to rediscover and live out the best ideals enshrined in our traditions."

The heightened awareness of our shared vulnerability at a time such as this calls us to new forms of solidarity reaching across all boundaries. In this respect, religions can offer a precious contribution to serve and heal our wounded world. Throughout human history, we know that religious hope has often inspired believers to care in love and compassion for those who suffer the tragedies of the human condition. This is a time to build further on common values of love, service and compassion that can lead us together towards healing and hope.

Even as I offer my best wishes to all the WCC's Buddhist partners on this special occasion, let me also express my deepest gratitude to you all for the longstanding relationship we enjoy. In the sincere hope that this friendship will be further strengthened, through solidarity and action, I wish you, your families and your communities peace, good health and happiness in abundance on this special occasion and always.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ioan Saucă". The signature is written in a cursive style with a vertical line for the letter 'I'.

Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Saucă  
Acting General Secretary  
World Council of Churches