



World Council of Churches

General Secretariat

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Geneva, June 1, 2015

Dear Buddhist brothers and sisters,

This letter brings you greetings of peace, joy and goodwill as you celebrate the auspicious occasion of Vesakh this year.

As you commemorate the birth, enlightenment and the passing away of Gautama Buddha on this festive occasion this is an appropriate occasion to be reminded of the growing need in today's world to transform suffering into peace, joy and liberation – something which was at the heart of the Buddha's teachings.

The teachings of the Buddha have provided inspiration and imagination across several generations and beyond geographical boundaries to overcome suffering. In a world where suffering seems to be on a rampant and rapid rise the teachings of Gautama Buddha are significant contributions also to today. In a context where humanity is constantly being fractured by violent conflicts, xenophobia and avoidable war we are reminded of Gautama Buddha's words, 'Hatred does not cease through hatred at any time, hatred ceases through love'. In a context where the integrity of creation is threatened by rampant ecological and economic abuse we are reminded of the Buddha's instructions to follow the path of simple living guided by morality rather than unbridled desire. The Buddha's teachings on generosity (*dana*) and compassion (*karuna*) assume much pertinence in a world of escalating consumerism which is confronted with the imminent danger of being obsessed with the self at the expense of the 'other'

We at the World Council of Churches cherish the relationship that we enjoy with our Buddhist partners and consider dialogue and interreligious cooperation as authentic and appropriate means of Christian presence and participation in our world today. We firmly believe that it is only through conversation and collaboration with neighbours of different faiths that we can become what the prophet Isaiah calls, 'repairers of the breach and restorers of the paths for habitation' (Isaiah 58:12) in a beautiful yet broken world.

The 10th assembly of the World Council of Churches issued a clarion call to all our member churches to embark on a 'Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace' and work towards a world where peace and justice are a living reality. In a world which is irreversibly interfaith we recognise that this journey towards justice and peace can only be

undertaken alongside people of different religious traditions. Pilgrimage entails an element of risk-taking and openness as one moves beyond the familiar and meets with the other. The spirit of risk-taking and openness holds open the hope of healing and wholeness, through which we can together further the flourishing of all life through mutual exchange and a spirit of reciprocity, hospitality and solidarity. In this spirit the World Council of Churches wishes you a meaningful observance of *Vesakh*. It is our fervent hope that this *Vesakh* will be a time of wellbeing and wholeness for all - especially those struggling to overcome suffering in our world today.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Olav Fykse Tveit". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Olav" being the most prominent.

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
General Secretary