Statement by

H.E Dr. A.K Abdul Momen
Permanent Representative
Of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh to the United Nations
at the Vesak Day celebration at the United Nations General Assembly

New York, 7 May 2012
Venerable Monks,
Excellencies,
Dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor and privilege for me to participate in this auspicious occasion of “Vesak Day,” a day which celebrates the birth, enlightenment and passing away of Gautam Buddha. I would like to take this opportunity to thank H.E. Ambassador Palitha Kohona, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka for coordinating this year’s celebration just like last year’s. I also like to thank my colleagues, the Permanent Representatives of Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Laos Republic, Mongolia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam for supporting organizing to day’s Vesak Day at the UN.

The teachings of Lord Buddha and his message of compassion, peace and goodwill have moved millions across nations. Celebrating Vesãk Day means making special efforts to bring happiness especially to the unfortunate like the aged, the depressed, the have-nots, the handicapped and the sick. The devotees are expected to celebrate Vesak to reiterate their determination to lead noble lives, to develop their minds, to practice loving-kindness and to bring peace and harmony to humanity. Buddhists believe that performing good deeds on Vesak Day would multiply merit many times over.

Lord Buddha was a human being. He was born as a human being, lived as a human being and passed away as a human being and thus he elevated the aspirations and hopes of humankind. Born as the son of King Saddho-dona and Queen Mohamaya in 624 B. C. in present Nepal, Siddhartha sacrificed his earthly pleasures, family, wealth and power to achieve enlightenment and he succeeded. He meditated with deep concentration under the Budi Brikko for years and was able to chart out a path for mankind in their quest for peace, happiness, and tranquility. Lord Buddha preached for a simple life of holiness, perfection and purification and he suggested a Middle course to be adopted for a peaceful life. Buddha’s teaching of moderation has widely been practiced in Bangladesh for years. His efforts for creation of friendship among people and love for creatures inspire all in building a happy and peaceful world. Over the ages, his timeless teachings on ‘Ahimsha’ or non-violence had touched our lives. Together with the clarion calls given by the leaders of all other great faiths-Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism- these urgings remind us of the universality of values which unite us into one big family, the humankind and the UN is the most suitable forum to cherish those values.

Buddhism is known to have come to what is now Bangladesh as early as in third century B.C. Over the centuries, Buddhism has indeed made deep impression on our social, cultural and intellectual lives. We take great pride in saying that the largest Buddhist Monastery or ‘Bihara’ on the south of the Himalayas was located on the northern part of Bangladesh in Paharpur. This excavation site is enlisted in UNESCO’s World Heritage list.
Excellencies:

Bangladesh is a home for diverse religious groups that have co-existed in complete harmony for generations. Although majority of the population is Muslim, people from different religious background share a relationship of mutual respect and are free to practice their own religion and culture. Every community is performing its rituals independently and living together with peace and communal harmony over the years. In Bangladesh, the Vesak Day, known as Buddha Purnima or Baishakh Purnima, is celebrated every year with due solemnity and dignity. Buddha Purnima is a national holiday in Bangladesh. Our Buddhist community like followers of all other religions and groups enjoy their full equal rights and privileges and they are free to freely pursue their peaceful and harmonious lives with others like any other citizens. There is complete freedom of religion, speech, mobility and practices in today's Bangladesh. Special programs highlighting the teaching and life of Buddha are being telecast on media. Newspapers bring out special features and supplementary copies. The Government has created separate welfare trusts for Buddhists also.

Excellencies:

Lord Buddha's message of love and non-violence are eternal. His teaching is as relevant today as it was 2553 years ago. The heart of the Teachings of the Buddha is contained in the teachings of the Four Noble Truths, namely,

The Noble Truth of Dukkho or suffering
The Origin or Cause of suffering
Nirodha or the End or Cessation of suffering
The Path which leads to the cessation of all sufferings

Therefore, the purpose of life, as per Buddha, is to put an end to sufferings. Question is; how to be successful over sufferings. Buddha showed his Noble Eight-fold Path.


Buddha believed that latent and creative power of human being is enough to get rid of sufferings and sorrows. In the process, he recognized the dignity and potentiality of human mind. In today's world, to have peace and happiness, there is room for inculcating Buddha's teachings, there is scope for building 'purified' minds. For us those who work at the UN and actively engaged in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, committed to establish peace, security and development, committed to end hunger and poverty, committed to face challenges of climate change and economic deprivation this Day, the Vesak Day, therefore, is of special significance. On this day, let us renew our collective resolve to end armed conflicts, to end war and terror, to end hunger and poverty, to end misunderstanding and misgivings, to end human disgrace, social and religious discrimination & challenges, and to end deprivation and sufferings for all nations, all religions and all regions on this planet earth.

I thank you all.