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, 16 May 2011
Mr. President, Reverend Monks, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman;

At the outset, I would like to thank President of today’s session Ambassador Hasan Kleib, Permanent Representative of Indonesia, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, and especially our colleagues Ambassador Dr. Palitha Kohona, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, and Permanent Representatives of Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Laos Republic, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam for organizing this year’s Vesak Day at the UN. I am also thankful to my compatriots; the Buddhists community of Bangladesh in New York and also my Mission for co-organizing this very special event.

Vesak Day commemorates the birth, enlightenment and nirvana of Siddhartha Gautama Buddha. This year is the 2600th anniversary of the enlightenment or receiving Buddatho of Gautama Buddha. It has been over a decade now that the UN started observing the Vesak Day. In my own country Bangladesh, the Vesak Day, known as Buddha Purnima or Baishakhi Purnima, is also celebrated every year with due solemnity and dignity. Buddha Purnima is a national holiday in Bangladesh and our UN Mission is also closed on that day. We have a small Buddhist community in Bangladesh and like followers of all other groups, religious or tribal, they 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.

The teachings of Lord Buddha and his message of compassion, peace and goodwill have moved and continue to move millions all across the globe. Celebrating Vesāk Day means making special efforts to bring happiness especially to the unfortunate like the aged, the depressed, 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. Born as the son of King Suddhodana and Queen Mohamaya in 624 B. C. in present Nepal Siddhartha sacrificed his pleasures, family, wealth and power to achieve enlightenment and he did. He mediated with deep concentration under the Budi Brikko or Bodhi Tree for years and was able to chart out a path for the mankind in their quest for peace, happiness, and tranquility. Lord Buddha suggested a Middle course to be adopted by his followers for leading a peaceful life. Buddha’s teaching of moderation has been widely practiced in Bangladesh for years. Lord Buddha believed in the purity of mindset to end violence and it is Bangladesh that sponsored the ‘Culture of Peace’ resolution at the UN as it believes that all intolerance, hatred, violence, war and conflicts and misunderstanding emanates from a corrupted mindset and therefore, it needs to be purified for an ever lasting peace.

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.


He also recommended five fundamental moral precepts and these are:

(1) not to lie,
(2) not to deprive a living thing of life,
(3) not to take what is not given to you,
(4) not to engage in illicit sexual conduct, and
(5) not to take intoxicating drinks.

These prohibitions along with his other teachings including the 8-fold noble path according to Buddha will help achieve the ultimate goal of life, i.e. Buddhism or Enlightenment.

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. He called for equality, fraternity, meditation, moderation, compassion and understanding—exhorting its followers to avoid evil, to do good, and to purify their minds. 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 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 misunderstanding and misgivings and to end human disgrace, social and religious discrimination and human sufferings for all nations, all religions and all regions from the face of the earth.

I thank you all.