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# 2600th Anniversary of Sri Sambuddhatva Jayanthi celebrated at the United Nations in Geneva

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The Government of Sri Lanka has consistently espoused and been guided by the gentle tenets of Buddhism, which emphasizes Karuna, Metta, Muditha and Upeksha meaning -kindness, loving compassion, thoughtfulness and equanimity said Kshenuka Senewiratne addressing a large international gathering at the commemoration of the 2600th Anniversary of Sri Sambuddhathva Jayanthi, which was celebrated at the United Nations in Geneva on the 11th May 2011. This commemorative event was organized by the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka in Geneva, at the United Nations Assembly Hall, which is considered a most prestigious venue. This occasion was also graced by Hon. Mahinda Amaraweera, Minister of Disaster Management and Mr. Kassym Jomart Tokayev, United Nations Under-Secretary General and the newly appointed Director General of the United Nations Office in Geneva, who is the former Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan.

Ambassador Senewiratne highlighted that Buddhist reflection has indeed been serving the nation to embark on ambitious development plans to enhance the lives of all Sri Lankan citizens, having concluded a 30 year old terrorist conflict at the hands of the world's most ruthless terrorist organization. She observed that the multi-cultural and multi religious nature of Sri Lankan society also sustains this culture of tolerance and acceptance of the differences, guided by the ethico-philosophical system of Buddhism. Referring to the UNGA resolution, which was spearheaded by Sri Lanka on the international recognition of the Day of Vesak at the United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations offices,

Ambassador Senewiratne recalled the teachings of the Lord Buddha, as representing the spirit of universal brotherhood, which the Member States together with the United Nations, are aiming to promote. She pointed out therefore that on the day of Vesak, nothing would be more appropriate for the UN than to commemorate the life and ideals of the Enlightened one. Quoting a teaching of the Lord Buddha, Ambassador Senewiratne stated that "hard is to be born as a human being. Hard is the life of mortals. The opportunity to listen to the Dhamma does not come easily. Rare is the birth of the Buddha". She emphasized that this event had for those present provided an opportunity to being acquainted with the teachings of the Buddha - especially at a time when humanity has become senseless. She expressed confidence that the discourses of the two erudite Venerables invited to deliver a sermon be a cooling shower to pacify the burning minds of humanity. In his statement, Mr. Tokayev listing global challenges stated that the Buddha's message of solidarity and mutual support continue to provide inspiration for collective efforts to build a better world. He pointed out that the principles of non-violence and the equality of mankind being central to Buddhism has made it relevant to the continued work for global peace and progress. Director General Tokayev underlined that much could be achieved as one human family by drawing potential of all. Venerable Olande Ananda Thero of the Pagoda Meditation Centre, who travelled from Sri Lanka, delivered a sermon, questioning if Buddhism is a religion, philosophy or a way of life concluding it to be an amalgam. This was followed by an interactive dialogue, which had enthusiastic participation paving the way to a comprehensive discussion on the Buddhist doctrine. Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala Thero, Head of London Buddhist Vihara & Chief Sangha Nayake of Great Britain led a brief segment on meditation. The gathering was afforded a practical experience of meditation. This commemorative ceremony was greatly appreciated by the invitees who proclaimed that they witnessed such an event for the first time at the United Nations in Geneva. The Assembly Hall was decorated to capture the Vesak ambiance in Sri Lanka which was much valued by the invitees, who included the diplomatic corps, staff of the UN, Specialized Agencies and international organizations and the Sri Lankan diaspora and communities from other Buddhist countries living in Switzerland. The ceremony was followed by an offering of food through devotion to the guests. This event was co-sponsored by the Bank of Ceylon and Sri Lankan airlines and assisted by the Permanent Mission to the UN from countries which have a Buddhist population. Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka Geneva