



*07 June 2012*

*Day of the VESAK*

*Message from the UN Secretary-General*

*and*

*Statement of FAO Director-General José Graziano Da Silva*

It is an honor to host this event at FAO to celebrate the Day of Vesak, in which His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka graces us with his presence. Ending hunger was the main driver for the creation of FAO in Nineteen Forty Five. The vision of FAO's founders for the organization is summed up in the historic document entitled "The Work of FAO".

They claimed that (and I quote) "Progress toward freedom from want is essential to lasting peace..." (end of quote). We are frequently being reminded how relevant these words still are for FAO nowadays. We know that peace is a precondition for food security, and food security is a condition for social stability and security in all senses.

Sri Lanka is a clear example of this connection. In the last three years, with a combination of peace and political commitment it has quickly gained ground in the fight against hunger and for social and economic development. And, in the last few years, Sri Lanka has achieved self-sufficiency in rice production/

FAO is honored to be a partner to Sri Lanka, and other countries, in its quest for food security and sustainable development.



Ladies and gentlemen, it is now my pleasure to read the Secretary-General's Message for the Day of Vesak 2012:

***(Secretary-General's Message for the Day of Vesak 2012)***

*We commemorate this year's Day of Vesak as the international community enters the final preparations for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro — a once-in-a-generation opportunity to set the world on a more equitable and sustainable path of development.*

*Buddhism has much to offer that process. The Buddha's assertion that, "The way to change the world is to change the nature of man" offers a critical insight into how to improve conditions for our planet and its inhabitants.*

*The spirit to care not just for ourselves but for others based on an awareness of our interlinked fates lies at the heart of Buddhism — and indeed all of the world's great religions.*

*These teachings challenge families, communities and nations to act in concert for the advancement of our common well-being. That is the best way to secure individual and collective progress in an interdependent world.*

*We must also change longstanding assumptions and open our minds to new ideas and possible solutions if we are to address major global threats, from the proliferation of deadly weapons to intolerance and inequality.*

*I invite Buddhists and people of all traditions to use the occasion of the Day of Vesak to reflect on how we can change our actions to pave the way for a more sustainable future.*

I thank you for attention.