

2541 (1998)

## The Twentieth General Conference Berkeley, Wollongong, NSW. Australia

The 20<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists was organized at Nan Tien Temple, Wollongong, N.S.W. Australia October 29 to November 2, 1998 (B.E. 2541). At the Opening Ceremony, many dignitaries both Bhikkhus and laities attending one of the greatest Buddhist events in the southern hemisphere, including Most Venerable Master Hsing Yun from Taiwan, the Honorable Mr. Philip Ruddock, Minister of Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs representing the Right Honorable Mr. John Howard, Prime Minister of Australia, the Honorable Mr. Purna B. Khadka, Minister of Youths, Sports and Culture of Nepal, Her Excellency Thai Ambassador at Canberra, Mrs. Laxanachanthorn Laohaphan, and others. Welcome addresses and messages from the heads of the Sangha as well as heads of State presented to the opening session were very relevant to Theme of the Conference “**Buddhism and Challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**”. Most Ven. Master Hsing Yun, proposed four main points in his address namely: Harmony and Respect amongst the Different Sects, Cooperation and Communication amongst all Practitioners, Development of Humanity in this Modern Age and Coordination and Unity within Buddhism. The proposal served as guideline to all the Buddhists to work together to realize the aims and objectives of the WFB and to meet the Lord Buddha’s instructions to the first five disciples prior to their going forth to different regions of the world “*Go ye now, and wander for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, out of compassion of the World*” How these messages and resolutions can be interpreted into action effectively would be one of the challenges for the world Buddhists in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Main resolutions and motions approved and passed by the General Conference can be concluded as follows :

1. H.E. Phan Wannamethee, Advisor to the Headquarters of the World Fellowship of Buddhists has been elected new

W.F.B President by unanimously acclamation to succeed his predecessor, H.E. Prof. Sanya Dharmasakti. The past WFB Presidents include Dr. G. P. Malalasekera (B.E. 2493-2501/1950-1958), Hon. U. Chan Htoon (B.E. 25012504/1958-1961), H.S.H. Princess Poon Pismai Diskul (B.E. 2506-2527/1963-1984) and H.E. Prof. Sanya Dharmasakti (B.E. 2528-2541/1985-1998).

2. The World Buddhist University (WBU) has been established in according to its Charter approved by the Conference on November 1, B.E. 2541 (1998) through unanimous acclamation. The University shall be an international community of Buddhist scholars and institutions engaged in research, training, spiritual practice and educational development based on Buddhism. It will serve as a coordinating centre for academic affairs with all the Buddhist institutions and scholars through a networking system. The inauguration of the University will be held officially in B.E. 2543 (2000) as part of celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the WFB. It will be the hallmark of the WFB in the Globalization Age.
3. Other resolutions include **Expansion of the WFB** by extending invitation to Buddhist organizations to apply for joining the WEB as Regional Centres; **Effective Communication** by establishing more effective communication system between the Regional Centres and the WFB Headquarters; Disaster preparedness by establishing a disaster fund; **Buddhist Pancasila Samadana** by encouraging all the Buddhists for observing the Buddhist Pancasila world wide; and Lumbini by supporting the initiative of the Nepalese Government to declare and develop Lumbini as the Fountain of World Peace and Holy Pilgrim Centre of the Buddhist world.

Afrer much deliberation the 20<sup>th</sup> of WFB General Conference released the following “ Declaration”:

We, representing the Buddhists of the World, assembled in Nan Tien Temple, Berkeley, Australia, from October 29 to November 2, B.E. 2541 (1998), do assert and affirm that we uphold the Aims and

Objective of the World Fellowship of Buddhists to preserve a Buddhist way of life, encounter all problems with our Buddha Dhamma attitudes, and propagate the sublime doctrine of the Buddha.

We remain committed to devote our utmost efforts to promote unity and cooperation among all Buddhists and others concerned to pursue the outcomes of the deliberations of the General Conference on the subject, “Buddhism and Challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”.

Deeply concerned with the problems and challenges of the world community, and encouraged by increasing opportunities for effective action, we do hereby declare our conviction:

- that rapid advances in global communications and transport be mobilised for the inculcation of Buddhist values of non-violence, tolerance, forbearance, loving kindness, compassion, solidarity and peaceful resolution of conflicts, so that humanity may progress in harmony for mutual benefit and well being.
- that the unprecedented progress in “high-tech” information technologies provide everexpanding opportunities for quality guidance to disseminate widely the benign message of the Buddha,
- that written testimony of Buddhist lives and practice inspire solutions to the diverse moral issues confronting humankind,
- that the World Fellowship of Buddhists should reaffirm its willingness to develop skills in its members, such as; readiness to mediate at the request of conflicting parties; to resolve disputes or conflicts through peaceful consultation, compromise and consensus.