



**VIETNAM BUDDHIST SANGHA
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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RESULT REPORT

**ENSURE AND PROMOTE THE RIGHTS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN VIETNAM
THROUGH THE ACTUAL ACTIONS OF VIETNAM BUDDHIST SANGHA**

*(Contribution to the general documents of Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights,
for process of universal periodic review - UPR)*

GENERAL INTRODUCTION OF THE VIETNAM BUDDHIST SANGHA (VBS)

Buddhism, the religion which was introduced and developed in Vietnam for over 2,000 years, has been recognized as one of the national religions in Vietnam for the reason that Buddhism has always imbued with national tradition of struggle for peace and people's happiness, accompany with the people of Vietnam during the process of consolidating and defending the country. VBS has made great contributions to national construction and protection.

VBS is sole legitimate religious organization and representative of the Monks and Nuns and Buddhist followers in Vietnam and Vietnamese overseas.

With the policies of respecting religious freedom by the Government, VBS was voluntarily established in 1981 on the basis of unification of nine Buddhist organizations and Buddhist sects in Vietnam. Right at the beginning, VBS is the members of Vietnam Fatherland Front. For over the past 30 years of establishment and legally operation in Vietnam, VBS is developing and contributing great deals to Buddhism and society.

In 2012, VBS has successfully organized the Nation Buddhist Congress tenure VII (2012-2017) with the participation of 1104 delegates from 21 to 24/11/2012 in Hanoi.

The Congress marks a development stage with width and depth manner of the VBS after more than 30 years of establishment. This also confirmed the position of the Sangha in the integration and development nationally as well as internationally. This is the Fifth Amendment that consistent with Buddhist operational requirements in the new phase and meets the epochal trends in the future.

VBS has strengthened organizational systems, including: 03 administrative levels of the Sangha, established the Provincial Sanghas in 59/63 provinces and cities in nationwide. VBS has two councils: The Dharma Council those who are Elders and presided the propagation of the Buddha Teaching including 89 Council members. The other, Executive Council comprises of 199 members who are young and active in Buddhist works and social affairs. This council comprises of 13 Buddhist Departments to run the Buddhist works, Institutes and Buddhist Universities.

The Sangha has recognized 7 representative of VBS among the Vietnamese communities in European countries such as the Republic of the Russian Federation, Germany, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Ukraine and Japan.

Today, the Sangha has 47,000 monks and nuns, 17,000 places of worship, 4 Buddhist Universities, 8 Buddhist colleges and 31 Provincial Buddhist Schools and tens of millions of Buddhist followers.

THE RESULT OF ENSURING AND PROMOTING THE RIGHT OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN VIETNAM THROUGH THE BUDDHIST WORKS AND ENGAGED BUDDHISM OF VBS

Constitution and laws of Vietnam from 1946 upto now have consistently affirmed that every citizen has the right to freedom of belief and religion, the rights of religious freedom have been respected and ensured before laws, religions are equal before law, the followers of religions plays an important part of the bloc of great national unity, promote cultural values and ethics of religion in building a new society ...

In 2004, the National Assembly Standing Committee of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam promulgated Ordinance on Belief and religion, the right to freedom of religion, the religion of the citizens is getting more respected and ensured. All religions in Vietnam in general and Buddhism in particular has been taken care at relevant of government, agencies, the Vietnam Fatherland Front, and coordinate the activities of the religious and social activities, care for life for believers and community development, building and defending the nation ...

With 2000 years of tradition, Vietnamese Buddhism has become a religion closely imbued with the national tradition of struggle for peace and people's happiness and the Buddhist Sangha has made great contributions to national construction and protection.

In the harmonious, united, and "to serve Buddhism in patriotic tradition" spirit with the inheritance of 2000 years Vietnam's Buddhist tradition, Monks, Nuns, Vietnamese Buddhists and Vietnamese people altogether to renovate country, and gain advance step by step in the fields of economics, politics, cultures, education, science and diplomatic service.

VBS have strengthened organizational systems, including: three levels of Sangha administration, 58 units at provincial level, capital department, total 10 faculties at every institutes of central Buddhist Sangha which have operated stably and progressively; 97 members of Patriarch Council, 147 full-fledged members and 48 alternate members of Executive Council, all the Buddhism's activities have been deployed according to 4th amended Charter, regulations of Buddhist sangha and national law; VBS has recognized and give certificates to 6 Vietnamese Buddhist communities in countries: Russia, Germany, Czech and Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and Ukraine.

In recent years, more or less the country unavoidably affected by global economical, financial crisis, and climate change, but with endeavor and determination of whole Buddhist Sangha, many importance Buddhism's affairs has been deployed synchronically and attained fine effects which has formed the basis of the summarization of the Buddhism's activities in the sixth tenure of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha such as: meeting's organization, conference, traditional Buddhist cultural ceremony, international, and national diplomatic affairs ... Including professional and academic activities as: monks and nuns training, Buddhist lay men and women guidance, Dharma propagation, ritual ceremony, cultural events, Buddhist cultural exhibition, financial economics, social charity, international Buddhism and Buddhist studies.

The ensuring and promoting the right of religious freedom in Vietnam is actively inflected through the results and development of VBS during 30 years of establishment and development.

Sangha Affairs:

After 32 years of building and developing, VBS has in total 46 699 monks and nuns, 17 287 places of worship (including Buddhist temples, pagodas, monasteries, and Buddhist Halls for practice), regularly has tens of thousands Buddhist followers practice in the pagodas and monasteries.

In the recent Five years (2007-2012), according the report of provincial sanghas, have organized 56 ceremonies of Buddhist Ordination to ordain 21,101 ordained ones to become monks and nuns. Every year, there are about 25,000 to 30,000 monks and nuns staying in summer retreat to observe Buddhist tradition and Law of Buddha; over 8,000 Theravada monks of Khmer taking retreat with their Theravada tradition.

VBS has appointed 1693 monks and nuns to be abbot of temples and pagodas, 133 Executive Boards of layman and laywomen to manage temples and pagodas. There are 4,789 laymen and laywomen who were ordained to stay in the monasteries.

The Khmer Theravada Buddhist sect has appointed 520 monks to be abbot of temples and pagodas and recognized 452 Executive Boards of Khmer Theravada Buddhist Sect.

Educations for Monks and Nuns:

Buddhist education in Vietnam has four levels: primary Buddhist education, intermediate, higher Buddhist school, and Buddhist universities. VBS has four Buddhist universities: in Hanoi, Hue, Ho Chi Minh City and the Theravada Buddhist University in Can Tho for Khmer monks. There are eight higher Buddhist schools, 31 intermediate Buddhist schools, and hundreds of primary Buddhist schools in provincial sanghas in the country. In the recent Five years (2007-2012), there are 2210 monks and nuns who graduated BA in Buddhist studies and 1732 who are studying in the Buddhist universities; 1127 monks and nuns who finished in higher Buddhist schools and 814 who are in the classes; 2430 monks and nuns who finished and there are 3254 who are in the intermediate Buddhist schools. There are 5839 Khmer Theravada monks who are studying Pali language.

Monks and nuns who have been studying in abroad: 113 monks and nuns studying in abroad: India, China, Taiwan, Korea, Australia, United State... At the same time, there are over 50 monks and nuns who have finished master and Ph.D program in Buddhist studies in India and China, they returned to Vietnam serving at different levels of Buddhist Sangha in the Buddhist institutes and Buddhist universities.

Dharma Propaganda:

VBS has been focused to strengthen and develop the quantity and quality of the Congregation of the Propaganda of Buddhist Dharma to satisfy to the contemporary society and the aims of the VBS to serve peoples in the remote mountainous villages and areas, the remote islands, and to serve the Vietnamese Overseas. VBS has successfully organized many training course, seminars to find out the ways to success in Buddhist Dharma propagation.

In the recent Five years (2007-2012), VBS has been successfully propagated and brought Buddhist teachings to the ethnic minorities in the Central Highland provinces and Northern mountainous provinces. VBS also organized many Dharma tours to serve Vietnamese Overseas in Russia, Germany, Czech, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and Ukraine.

VBS has been focused on how to bring Buddhist teachings to the young generations. Many Buddhist festivals have been organized for young students and children in High-School on the occasion of summer vacation.

Regarding to the practices of ritual, VBS has successfully organized the the UN Vesak Day's with the participants 74 countries and regions. Every year, the Provincial Sangha of VBS organizes Ullambana ceremonies with various activities.

Especially, on the occasion of 1000 years of Thang Long – Ha Noi, VBS has organized the Grand Ceremony to preserve the Buddhist culture of Ly Dynasty. On the occasion of the anniversary of 700 years of the passing-away of the founder of the Truc Lam Buddhist Sect of Vietnam, the King Tran Nhan Tong (in the 13th Century AD), VBS has sent request to the Government of Vietnam to certify Kinh Tran Nhan Tong to be the King-Buddha of Vietnam Buddhism and the World's well-known man.

Besides, VBS has also organized the Grand ceremonies to memorize the army men and people who died during the wars in Vietnam.

In the recent Five years (2007-2012), VBS has newly constructed and renovated the Buddhist temples and pagodas to preserve the Buddhist culture as well as Vietnamese typical Buddhist architecture.

UNESCO has recognized the wooden Buddhist Sutras of the 700 years old of Vinh Nghiem pagoda to be the memorial heritage of human and the Mot Cot (One pillar) pagoda in Hanoi was granted to be the typical Buddhist architecture of Asia.

Social Charity has been regarded as one of the crucial aims of VBS in order to teach Monks and Nuns as well as Buddhist followers to observe Buddha's Teachings of compassion. During the recent years, VBS has established 165 Tue Tinh Health Center to take care of homeless, orphan children, old-aged persons. Also, VBS focused on teaching people to raise their awareness on minimizing the discrimination against HIV/AIDS patients

In the field of International Buddhist affairs, VBS has confirmed their responsibility in the World Buddhist Communities and the global concerns such as wars, conflicts, climate change and global warming etc. VBS has also actively participated in International Buddhist conferences and sent delegates to join and have peace dialogues in the International and Regional interfaith dialogues.

VBS has warmly welcomed many international Buddhist delegations, International organizations and agencies to have a visit and meeting with VBS.

On the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the establishment, VBS has opened and broadcasted the Buddhist TV Channel: An Vien – AVG channel.

VBS has also published many books in the field Buddhist history, Buddhist philosophy, magazines, and newspaper.

RECOMMENDATIONS

VBS requests government of Vietnam, Fatherland Front take some more concerns and supports for VBS during the process of constructing the nation and national development in the field of health care, education and social charity.

Government of Vietnam continues to finalize the policies and legal systems on beliefs and religions for better performance of religious practices in general and Buddhism in particular.

Government of Vietnam should be training provincial officers in the fields of state management of religion helping them to understand that the government policies in the right way, so that, ensure the right of religious freedom of peoples in the ethnic group and remote mountainous areas.

**STANDING COMMITTEE OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
STANDING DEPUTY – PRESIDENT**

(signed)

Kindly addressed to:

MOST VEN. THICH THANH NHIEU

- *Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights;*
- *Archived file.*

