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Final Statement of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue at the end of the Seventh Buddhist-Christian Colloquium (Bangkok, 13 to 16 November 2023)

Seventh Buddhist-Christian Colloquium

Final Statement

The Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, together with the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Mahamakut Buddhist University, Chinese Buddhist Order of Sangha in Thailand, Wat Phra Chetuphon, the Sirivadhanabhakdi Foundation, and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand, organized the Seventh Buddhist-Christian Colloquium, which took place in Bangkok from 13 to 16 November 2023.

The theme of the Colloquium was *Karuṇā and Agape in Dialogue for Healing a Wounded Humanity and the Earth*. Around one hundred fifty Buddhists and Christians from Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Singapore, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Thailand, Taiwan, the United Kingdom and the Holy See took part, together with a representative from the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences.

Local authorities and representatives of other religions present in Thailand, particularly Hindu, Muslim and Sikh, offered their best wishes at the inaugural session.

We agreed that today's humanity is living in a rapidly changing world, with positive and negative consequences for the human family and the earth. Moreover, we met at a crucial moment when people all over the world are facing a multitude of global challenges from which no one is completely immune.

Yet, in these troubled times, we refuse to give in to despair, for we strongly believe that in the midst of dark clouds, those who are deeply rooted in their respective religious traditions and willing to work together with everyone can bring a ray of hope to a desperate humanity. As Buddhists and Christians, we see the Buddha and Jesus as Great Healers. The Buddha pointed to greed and Jesus to sin as the cause of suffering. On many levels, Jesus and the Buddha proposed love and compassion as medicine to drive out the darkness in the human heart and the world. Nourished by their respective spiritual teachings, Buddhists and Christians, for thousands of years, have adopted compassionate ways of living to address the suffering of life.

We believe that now more than ever, we need to work together and with a great sense of responsibility, we concurred on the following:

Acknowledge: Even though our respective religious teachings invite us to build a culture of compassion, we often turn a blind eye to today's sufferings. We deplore the words and actions that have voluntarily or involuntarily contributed to sow death and destruction, hatred, and revenge. We need to acknowledge that we belong to one human family and owe everyone equal dignity and respect.

Dialogue: We are convinced that there will be no peace without dialogue. Dialogue can prevent violence, heal both the wounded victim and the perpetrator, and inspire people to find non-violent ways of resolving conflicts. It can mobilize different religious groups to seek justice and truth, to protect the planet, and to protest against its destruction.

Cultivate: Individually as well as socially, we need to cultivate empathy for the suffering of others and the environment. Thus, we need compassion in political and economic decisions to prevent exclusion and inequality and to foster inclusion, justice and respect.

Cooperate: No one is saved alone; we can only be saved together for we are interconnected and interdependent. Thus, we need to cooperate with everyone: civil society, followers of other religions, media personnel, governments, international bodies, academic and scientific communities, and all other interested parties in order to foster an inclusive world.

Innovate: We possess religious classics and centuries of experience and wisdom. We need to make these relevant to our wounded humanity and to save the battered earth. We therefore advocate for scholarly endeavours among academic and research institutions with the goal of helping religious movements to alter how they perceive, think and conceive of the *other*s well as the planet.

Educate: Families, communities, educational institutions, religious leaders, and the media have a leading role to play in educating all, especially children, in caring and sharing relationships with one another and with the environment. In addition, in order to inspire and reawaken our society, we need to tell the stories of individuals who have made sacrifices to help others and the earth.

Pray: We believe that prayer and meditation can turn things upside down by purifying our hearts and minds; generating loving-kindness, mercy and forgiveness where there is hatred and vengeance creating a spirit of respect and care for the *other* and the earth. We need to reawaken the spiritual energy in our respective followers.

The participants express their gratitude to the organisers for the spiritual atmosphere at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and for the Thai hospitality that helped them engage with one another with friendship and respect. They also affirmed their ardent desire to work together to implement the fruits of this Colloquium in their respective regions.

It was decided that the Eighth Buddhist-Christian Colloquium would be held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in 2025.
