

# THE BASIC STUDYING OF THE INFLUENCE OF BUDDHISM IN GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (Through the typical case of King Tran Nhan Tong - Vietnam)

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## ABSTRACT

*Buddhism with the power of compassion, wisdom etc. has effectively solved social and human issues in many ways; strongly influenced on social life all over the world; helped humanity to get rid of suffering, and head to happiness and fullness.*

*The influence of Buddhism is clear when the Vesak International Organization Committee is under the Economic and Social Committee of the United Nations. This opportunity helps spread out Buddha's message of compassion, wisdom, peace and non-violence throughout the world, in global leadership, sustainable social development.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION OF ISSUE

Buddhism with the power of compassion, wisdom etc. has effectively solved social and human issues in many ways; strongly influenced on social life all over the world; helped humanity to get rid of suffering, and head to happiness and fullness.

The influence of Buddhism is getting more obvious when the

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International Vesak International Committee under the Economic and Social Committee of the United Nations regularly organizes scientific conferences on Buddhism with themes related to ideals and activities entering the reality, associated with an “awakening” society for people, for sustainable social development.

To better understand the influence of Buddhism in global leadership and sustainable social development, we also need to recall the idea of Vesak and Vesak celebration so that we will have the opportunity to contribute a little more of our compassion and wisdom for a sustainable society today and tomorrow.

In ancient Indian language, Vesak means spirituality. Vesak is also a word for one of the ancient Indian calendar months; Vesak is also the first month of the year in the old Nepalese calendar.

In addition, the date of birth, the day of enlightenment, and the day of nirvana - the three great events of Buddha's life - took place on the full moon day of Vesak month. According to researchers, it is the full moon day of the fourth lunar month of the East or the fifth solar month of the West. Therefore, the origin of Vesak Festival was held in many countries such as Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam etc. which have Buddhism and Buddhism is always growing

Upstreaming of the history, on December 15, 1999, at the 54th session of the United Nations General Assembly, after discussing Section 174 of the agenda, the General Assembly voted, officially acknowledged: Buddhism is a typical religion and the Patriarch of Shakyamuni Buddha is a typical figure. The Buddha's idea from the past “Peace, friendship, cooperation, development” is also the motto of the United Nations today. The United Nations General Assembly adopted the following contents: From 2000 onwards, every year, the United Nations will hold the Vesak celebration at a time equivalent to the full moon day of May. The Vesak celebration is held at the United Nations headquarter in New York City, the United States and the United Nations centers in different regions of the world. Countries with Buddhism can host the United Nations Vesak celebration in their countries, according to the commitments and implementation of UN regulations.

The Vesak celebration has become the Great Cultural and Humanity Festival on the international scale of the United Nations.

For the first time, in 2000, the United Nations Vesak Festival took place solemnly at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, with the participation of Sanghas from 34 countries. Since 2004, Vesak Festival has been hosted by countries with Buddhism 12 times, of which 9 times were held in Thailand under the patronage of the Royal Thai government and Thai's Sangha. Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University served as the main organizer along with the Asia Pacific Office of United Nations and Buddhamonthon World Buddhism Center, Bangkok, Thailand. Once Vesak was held in Sri Lanka in 2016.

Since 2013, the International Organization Committee of Vesak has become an organization under the Economic and Social Committee of United Nations. This great event is considered by the world Buddhist community as a precious opportunity to spread Buddha's message of compassion, wisdom, peace and non-violence throughout the world.

Twice Vesak was held in Vietnam. In 2008, Vietnamese Government hosted the United Nations Vesak Festival with the cooperation of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha. In 2014, Vietnam Buddhist Sangha hosted and organized this great ceremony from socialization funds with the guidance and help from the Government regarding: security and safety in and out the event, communication and other related issues. United Nations Vesak Festival 2008 was held in Vietnam on the occasion of Buddha's birthday. Vietnamese also call this the Great Buddha's Birthday of United Nations.

In 2019, for the third time, the United Nations Vesak Festival - The Great Buddha's Birthday is held solemnly and intimately in Vietnam.

The annual Vesak Festival of the United Nations is an opportunity to help Buddhism, the Buddhist community in the world in general and Vietnam in particular spread Buddha's message of compassion, wisdom, peace and non-violence worldwide, in global leadership and sustainable social development.

When studying basically the influence of Buddhism in global

leadership and sustainable social development, the author hopes to contribute an additional perspective, a light of fire, though small to join monks and nuns and Buddhists in motivating and continuing to spread the light of the Buddha's compassion, wisdom and peace messages to people in the whole world.

In this article, the author will present three main contents:

- i. The scientific basis of issue
- ii. King Tran Nhan Tong - Buddhism in global leadership and sustainable social development
- iii. Open perspective in contributing to global leadership and sustainable social development of the 20th century Buddhism.

From the point of view of a teacher having 29 years of experience in the profession, who always cultivates the mind of goodness; longs to transmit some experience to live happily; gathers knowledge of expertise, of Buddhism to foster the goodness, humanity, kindness in students for a life of goodness, kindness and happiness, this article presents and analyzes the three main contents mentioned above.

## 2. SOLVING OF THE ISSUE

### 2.1. The scientific basis of issue

#### 2.1.1. *Some relevant concepts to the issue*

In order to have a scientific basis to explore and discover Buddhism in global leadership and sustainable social development, it is important to review some concepts: Buddhism, global leadership, development, sustainable society... in order to come to an unity in understanding, discovering, commenting and evaluating.

The above concepts are understood uniformly by Vietnamese people as in Hoang Phe's dictionary:

“Buddhism is a religion born in the sixth century BC, founded by Shakyamuni Buddha.”

“Leadership is creating policies, direction and organization, encouragement and implementation.”

“Society is a form of human living together at a certain

development level of history, built on the basis of a certain mode of production; crowded with people who live together for a while; gathers people with the same economic and political status, and class.”

“Development is changing or making changes from little to many, narrow to wide, low to high, simple to complex.”

From the common understanding of such concepts in Vietnamese society, the influence of Buddhism in global leadership and sustainable social development is increasingly widespread.

### *2.1.2. Tran Nhan Tong Buddha and Vietnamese Buddhism*

King Tran Nhan Tong was born on 11 November in the year of Horse 1258 and died on 1 November, the year of Monkey 1308. He was in the throne for 14 years, 5 years as Grand Emperor, and had 8 years of ordination. He lived for 50 years. He was the 3rd king of the Tran dynasty - the period of great martial arts and literature, religions and daily life in extreme harmony.

Tran Nhan Tong is a great cultural figure, a national hero, an emperor who has left behind a great political career. He was a thinker, an educator, an artist, a humanist and a great religious leader. He has the combination, and sublimation of Vietnamese culture, Buddhism and the Three Teachings of the contemporary Eastern Aura. He was a national hero who led the entire population against the Yuan enemy, saved the nation and helped save humanity from the war disaster.

Buddhism has been introduced and has been present in Vietnam for over 2000 years. In the history of Vietnam, there were periods when Buddhism became the national religion (XI - XIII century, Ly - Tran period in Vietnam). Buddhist philosophy and thought deeply influenced the society and every aspect of social life. It can be seen that, from the early days of its introduction into Vietnam, Buddhism harmonized with indigenous cultural practices. The most typical example is during reign of King Hoang Tran Nhan Tong. In Vietnam, he is a pioneer in the implementation of a political way which is for people by combining peaceful spirit with Bodhisattva's mercy.

Not only that, he was the one who initiated and promoted the great spirit of national unity with the spirit of kindness, tolerance

and harmony. Among these, kindness is the immense light that shines throughout the universe in the present and in the future. He is the model not only of “the noble man” but also the model of “solemn Bodhisattva” for Vietnamese people and many Buddhists around the world.

Buddha - King Tran Nhan Tong - in fact not only protected, preserved and built the country but also founded the Vietnam Zen lineage before, during and after his renunciation. Both Vietnamese people and Buddhists know him as the founder of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha. He has a long-lasting positive impact on Vietnamese history and Vietnamese Buddhism. In other words, he made a great contribution to the receiving and localizing Buddhism ideals; found the unique way to make Buddhism suitable for Vietnamese and spread it out to every individual. At the same time, he brought reforms of the philosophical thought and spiritual practice to Vietnamese people.

His Buddhism thought has a profound meditation theory, strong determination for a path of liberation, but is still so simple that every Vietnamese can study and practice daily to achieve peace and happiness in their lives. Therefore, people of that time venerated him as Buddha Truc Lam, a Vietnamese Buddha. People today are becoming more and more aware of his magnificent and profound intimacy. He was a great cultural figure and humanist of all time.

King Tran Nhan Tong remains an example of Buddhism entering daily life - Buddhism in leadership, social development and sustainable global integration.

## 2.2. King Tran Nhan Tong - Buddhism in global leadership and sustainable social development

### 2.2.1. *The influence of King Tran Nhan Tong in leadership and development of Vietnamese society*

Accompanying and being honored by Vietnamese history and people but perhaps the highlight of the influence of Buddha Tran Nhan Tong in leadership and development of Vietnamese society is concluded in the celebration of 700 years from his entering the nirvana, when the National Assembly Chairman Nguyen Phu Trong - now General Secretary and President of Vietnam affirmed:

“In the multitude of high merits taught by predecessors. King Tran Nhan Tong has many contributions and has a special position in the history of the nation.

For his life, he was an eminent king. He led people with unity and defeated Yuan enemy twice, given that it was the most powerful invader in the world at that time. That victory is forever engraved in the national golden history. After giving the throne to his son, he devoted himself to finding a plan to nurture and protect people in order to build and develop the country.

For religion, he is a Zen master, the founder and leader of the Truc Lam branch of Zen, his own meditation line in Vietnamese Buddhism. Having a heart for others, the vision of a wise king, an enlightened monk, he advocated building the religion to nurture and promote the harmony mind among people, build and foster their independence, self-reliance, foster the harmony in the world, between king and his officials, father and son, husband and wife, etc. That thought is the root of the national strength which over the time has become the tradition of Vietnam.

In his life and career, religion and life are always in harmony with the happiness of everyone. He skillfully combined the religious mind, virtue to build a strong life. That merit is preserved till today and forever.”(2)

Over the years, along with the development of Vietnam and the world in the globalization environment, in a flat world, with 4.0 technologies, in the strong scientific and technological development, in global communication, with so many opportunities and challenges, with the support of many country leaders and different social institutions, Buddhism with its credo of “Peace, friendship, cooperation and mutual development” toward a sustainable global society is growing and confirms its positive role in the development of a sustainable and prosperous global society.

### *2.2.2. Contribution of King Tran Nhan Tong in leadership and sustainable global social development*

Today, mentioning King Tran Nhan Tong, after more than 710 years of his entry into nirvana, we remember him and are grateful for the golden, most brilliant dynasty in Vietnamese history. During

the dynasty, the military commander contributed his intellectual strength, outstanding talent as a great politician and militarist to unite his people unanimously, “to fight together” to fight against the most powerful army in the world at that time - the Yuan army. Not only that, the whole nation was enlightened by his virtue. Many talented and good generals are touched, enlightened by him. He had no regret to spare his efforts, blood and bones to build and protect the country. He helped people under his reign to have a happy, prosperous, peaceful, life in body and mind. They are the most convincing and eloquent testament to the contribution of King Tran Nhan Tong in the leadership and development of ancient Vietnamese society, which is the root of Vietnamese cultural identity so that Vietnam can continue to reach higher and farther when building a sustainable society in global integration.

He is also the King of Buddha who gave up the good, rich and glorious flowers to choose for himself the path of monotheism: to practice monastic life and still stick to and care for the world, the daily life of Vietnamese people. He devoted himself to the desire to build an ideal Buddhism closely linked to people’s real life, the destiny of the nation. His contribution is immensely great through virtue of propagating and guiding people to build a moral foundation and a living standard that are bold with the identity and spirit of Vietnamese nation and eliminate practices of superstition, as well as practice regularly the Ten goodness. He blew into the heavenly frame of Vietnamese Buddhism, which had a long history, a new wind - the cool wind of the spirit of incarnation, not only in the historical moment but also till this day, and tomorrow.

Referring to the contributions of King Tran Nhan Tong in leadership, global sustainable social development, we cannot help but to re-affirm what made the great greatness in his life that take more time for our generation and next generations to study and research:

- i. He is the great king who was extremely good at martial arts, military, commanding, and twice defeated Yuan army.
- ii. At the time when he was enlightened in Buddhism, it



became clear that the “If the king’s morality is too big, it is impossible for him to lead a slavery country.”

- iii. He successfully built an incarnate Buddhism - Vietnam Buddhism - useful for people, for life, and he committed to educating people everywhere.
- iv. The Buddhism he built is in association with people’s real life, the fate of the country. Therefore, in the year of his ordination, our country was invaded by Ai Lao and he went to the battle as a Zen master.
- v. Throughout his journey to educate people, his visit to Champa left a deep lesson on an important diplomatic strategy that protected the good relations between Vietnam and Champa.

For his whole life, King Tran Nhan Tong - the Buddha of Vietnam - contributed in teaching, leading people to live morally, honestly, developed Vietnamese society to become a peaceful society, honest, kind, a ecstasy place in this earth, a paradise worth living with high quality. He created a glorious period of national history in many ways.

King Tran Nhan Tong made a great contribution to the founding of Truc Lam Zen Buddhism in Vietnam, unifying the national ideology, building a religious ideology bearing the national cultural identity of Vietnam. Generations of Vietnamese people acknowledge, appreciate, and admire him and his merits as treasures of multi-value cultural heritage in many ways. Increasingly, our generation today especially treasures those in the process of leadership, social development in Vietnam and the as well as in the global sustainable development. Special cultural heritage treasures need to be acknowledged, preserved, transmitted and continued to develop in all aspects (here, the author points to three aspects and will discuss these aspects on another occasion):

- i. Time of cultural heritage: What Vietnamese Truc Lam Buddhism and Zen Buddhism leave behind were important in the past, and they last until today, and future. They are also the trigger our looking towards the origin.

- ii. Creativity in the structure of cultural heritage: Truc Lam Zen Buddhism and King Buddha are not only heritage structures handed down from the past but also structured, inherited and re-created in the present and in the future.
- iii. Existence of the overall cultural heritage: Truc Lam Zen Buddhism and King Buddha are not only a single event, cultural heritage phenomenon but also a phenomenon, a unique and extraordinary cultural heritage event in a whole.

It can be affirmed that the King Buddha, Truc Lam and the cultural heritage have a dialectical relationship between the common and the particular, between the subject and the object, between the fractions and the whole, between tradition and present and they are inseparable towards a sustainable development society in the context of a global flat world.

### 3. VIETNAMESE BUDDHISM WITH GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT OF A SUSTAINABLE PEACEFUL SOCIETY

In global leadership and the development of a peaceful, sustainable society, the core of public administration is social work to effectively help people and society. Vietnamese Buddhism with monks, nuns, and Buddhist in the process of entering life also focus on that core issue for people's happiness, and a prosperous and sustainable development of society.

Up to now, Vietnamese monks, nuns and Buddhists who have participated in social work, incarnation, and helped the community are mostly "dependent on grace". At present, activities to help people and society and the application of Buddhism in social work in Vietnam have had interferences and mutual support to develop together. Public officials and civil servants in public administration learn, and cooperate with Buddhist organizations and monks in leading and organizing the application of Buddhism to social work activities at schools, hospitals, cultural institutions, public places of the community etc. The number of monks, and nuns participate in learning, understanding and participating social work is increasing. It can be said that the present life requires

Buddhist social workers to have higher criteria and capacity to be compatible with social workers in public administration. The reform process is aimed at: “Building the organizational structure of the entire streamlined, effective and efficient political system; promoting the fight against corruption, wastefulness and bureaucracy.” issued by the Party and Government of Vietnam in the Central Resolution XII. (3)

Modern social work is derived from religious charitable activities. Many activities of Vietnamese Buddhism when participating in social work have been and continue to make charitable activities spread stronger and more effectively.

Vietnamese Buddhism through the method of adhering to the “four-gauge” spirit and “constant invariance” from the time of the King Buddha has shown the effectiveness of Buddhism with global leadership and sustainable social development. Specifically, Vietnamese Buddhism has focused on leading beliefs for each person in society. Buddhism helps every citizen to believe in the right things, into good things, to help them believe in righteous thoughts in order to be able to increase their blessings, goodness, and pursuit towards real happiness and peace of mind.

Buddhism gives people true belief because that belief is built on three solid grounds: (i). Pure and clear wisdom; (ii). the truth; (iii). the spirit of purity is equal, not biased by oppressive impulse. Once the belief formed will lead people’s thinking and action, create a source of motivation to help people become aspirations. Since then, people will be more persistent with their own beliefs, reinforcing the Buddhist faith. Greater clarity contributes to the influence of Buddhism in education, participation in social work, global leadership and sustainable social development when entering life.

Not only that, Buddhism also shows that if you want to lead the world and develop a sustainable peaceful society, you must lead, or educate true faith with sincerity, perseverance and meticulousness. And after all, we must have the faith of the leading and educating people. Vietnamese Buddhism is increasingly influencing global leadership and developing a sustainable peaceful society because of the beliefs of monks, nuns, and Buddhists in society through action

and entering life which are accompanying public administration in many different social affairs.

#### 4. OPEN PERSPECTIVE IN CONTRIBUTING TO GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISM IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

Like many other countries in the world, Vietnam is a diverse country in ethnicity, religion and different types of beliefs. The State of Vietnam always respects, guarantees the freedom and equality of religious beliefs of ethnic groups in the view of “The peoples are equal, united, respectful and help each other to develop”. All registered teachers are protected by law, are free to practice religion, open dignitaries, publish books, build and repair worship facilities in accordance with the law.

In fact, the first Constitution of Vietnam affirmed: “Vietnamese citizens have freedom of belief”. Since then, people’s right to freedom of religious beliefs has always been inherited and developed in our Constitutions and clearly defined in the Law on Belief and Religion adopted by the National Assembly of Vietnam on 18 November 2017.

It can be said that Vietnam and other countries in the world have policies and measures to manage religion and Buddhism management based on the principle of respecting religious freedom and harmony in order to develop a sustainable country.

Buddhism as well as religions in general direct people to love, remind people in society to preserve and practice good values in morality, cause and effect, holy wisdom; orient human to religious faith in the process of faith, resolution, action, and witness. By that we can to promote a harmonious society of science and technology by giving, loving, benefiting and co-working so that people really have equality and happiness in society.

Vietnam always actively addresses the relationship between the state and religious organizations, including Buddhism; promoting self-regulation of religions in the process of entering life to adapt to the management of the state, in the process of effectively participating in the policy implementation and programs for

socio-economic development, improving material and cultural life of religious communities, Buddhist communities and people, contributing to stabilizing socio-political security, to peaceful and sustainable development.

Through the lens of the current cultural and development perspective, Buddhism is a powerful resource that needs to be mobilized, transformed into spiritual strength towards peaceful development and social sustainability. In fact, Buddhism relates to development issues, especially in developing countries by referring to elements of ideas, practices and experiences. In addition, Buddhism also contributes to social development in relation to the concept of human development in terms of:

- i. Politics and economy: paying attention to stability, security and wealth, relative wealth of citizens.
- ii. About society: paying attention to the ability of literacy, education ability, social relations, living quality of citizens
- iii. Ethics: paying attention to the development of conscience, moral awareness, will and the ability to act based on proper knowledge of society and culture.
- iv. In terms of psychology: caring about the health of mind, self-esteem, success in meaningful relationships and happiness.

Currently, in the global trend, in the rapid development of modern science and technology, strong changes in economy, society and culture, Buddhism is also strongly affected and an adaptive change is required in the new context.

The special figures of Buddhism such as the ancient Tran Nhan Tong Buddha of Vietnam, or the current special figures of Buddhism such as Thich Nhat Hanh, India's Gyalwang Drukpa etc. have increased their influence that leads the spirit of Buddhism to all people in society.

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh has been involved in social activities since the 1960s as a scholar, teacher and peace activist, the founder of Van Hanh Buddhist University in Saigon and La Boi

publisher (publishing a magazine for peace). In 1966, he founded the Order of Continuation. He wrote books and introduced the concept of “Buddhist commitment” to everyone. He is also a famous lecturer, writer, poet and monk of world Buddhism, the abbot stayed at Plum Village temple, in the south of France for decades.

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh spreads the message of peace and compassion, universal moral message in everyday life with “Practice 5 mindfulness”. Recently, Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh has established a worldwide movement for young people to train in the habits of “Practicing 5 Mindfulness”, and initiated a training program for international teachers to teach mindfulness at schools in Europe, America and Asia.

His unique and famous literary works, good sayings and stories expressing the nature of his mindfulness from 2010 to date are displayed in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Canada, Germany, France and New York. In addition, he has opened many monasteries in California, New York, Vietnam, Paris, Hong Kong, Thailand, Mississippi and Australia, and an “Applied Buddhist Institute” in Germany.

In recent years, Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh has led events for US, British, Irish, Indian and Thai members of Parliaments; proposed UNESCO to call for specific steps to reduce violence, war; made positive impact on the globe such as appearing in high-minded events at Google, World Bank, Harvard University Medical School. At present, he has returned to settle down in Vietnam. (4)

Working non-stop, Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh has become the second most influential Buddhist leader in the West world, after the Dalai Lama, according to foreign news agencies. “American queen” Oprah Winfrey also said “Thich Nhat Hanh is one of the most influential spiritual leaders in our time”.

The Gyalwang Drukpa of India is also a special character. At the head of the Drukpa Lineage with over 30 years of teaching the Dharma around the world, his holiness initiated many humanitarian projects, in accordance with the principle of serving the Drukpa Lineage and humanity.

One of the most outstanding projects of his holiness is the

“Live to Love International Charity” (Living to Love) “For the Millennium Development Goals” and promoting 5 charitable goals: environmental protection, rescuing, education, health services and heritage preservation. He also supported the equal rights of women with the idea: “Enlightenment regardless of gender, compassion regardless of gender, wisdom regardless of gender, because in nature, we are all Buddhas” and “Everyone, regardless of whether they are male or female, has the potential and full authority to attain enlightenment.” He is also a “Guardian of the Himalayas” and attempts in humanitarian activities and contributes to the preservation of the world environment.

The typical Buddhist figures mentioned above are the most authentic evidence to affirm that Buddhism meets all the requirements of global practice, of the flat world today.

## 5. CONCLUSION

From what Vietnam Buddhism and world Buddhism have accomplished throughout the history process, we fully believe that Buddhism today meets all the requirements of future religions – Global religion. Albert Einstein, the world’s No. 1 science-famous brain in the twentieth century, once affirmed: “The religion of the future will be a global religion, transcending all gods, dogmas and theology. That religion must embrace both the natural and the supernatural aspects, based on the basis of moral consciousness, arising from the overall experience of all these areas in a fully meaningful way. Buddhism will meet those conditions”. (5)

In the 21st century, Buddhism contributes to global leadership and sustainable social development through active participation in social affairs in public administration. Buddhism can play an active role in socio-economic development with the creation of strong economies.

Buddhism can be a partner for social growth because people have the right to choose faith and possess brain’s infinite creativity.

Buddhism provides a moral foundation for society through good faith and the mindfulness that human faith has led.

Buddhism also brings peace of mind and positive emotions to

followers and people, helps them towards a happy and peaceful life.

Buddhism has a wide range of social connections, maintains a wide network of countries around the world, links different social events with religious activities.

Buddhism can support regimes supporting education, and many of the social work fields focusing on improving living qualities. It can call for and create many resources to work on daily issues.

Buddhism has supported in mass mobilization, in people-to-people relations, and sustained public relations.

In modern society, Buddhism is also a social service partner that expresses citizens' spirit and responsibility. Buddhism also spread its ideology and theory to support business, to grow prosperity and social equality.

This article closes with an open view of Buddhism in the 21st century, shows the great impact of Buddhism in global leadership and sustainable social development with a mechanism in which everyone can attend. The spirit of incarnation, the commitment of Buddhism is more promoted in modern society. It helps people practice their faiths in the global social integration, social networking, create a sustainable peaceful society.

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