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Welcome Address

June 16, 2025

Dear Venerables, Dharma Friends, Esteemed Guests, and Beloved Members of the Global Sangha,

On behalf of Sakyadhita International, it is my deepest honor and joy to welcome you all to the 2025 Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women here in Sarawak, Malaysia.

What a wonderful and significant gathering of hundreds of Buddhist women, lay and monastic, scholars and activists, artists and meditators—gathered from every corner of the world. This year, we are joined by participants from more than 35 countries, representing the diversity of traditions, cultures, languages, and lived experiences. Whether you travelled from nearby Southeast Asia, across the Himalayas, from East Asia, or from communities in Europe, Africa, or the Americas, your presence here is a profound witness to the strength, wisdom, and resilience of Buddhist women around the world. This global sangha is profound and beautiful.

The theme of this year's conference, "Buddhist Women: Sustaining the Dharma, Empowering Communities," invites us to reflect on the deep, transformative roles that Buddhist women continue to play across the world—not just in preserving the Buddha's teachings, but in applying them skillfully to meet the unprecedented needs of today's world. Buddhist women have always been agents of healing, courage, innovation, and peace and while we gather to celebrate this history, we also need this energy and commitment more than ever.

Over the next few days, we will explore this theme through over several panels of academic presentations, experiential workshops, and a wide range of Dharma talks, roundtables, and community-building activities. Our panels will engage urgent issues: the changing roles of Bhikkhunis and laywomen, the intersection of Buddhist practice with LGBTQ+ identity, the emergence of female Buddhist leaders across Asia, the transmission of trauma-informed Dharma, and the role of women in sustaining monasticism and education.

In addition, we are offering an exciting schedule of workshops ranging from meditation and chanting, healing through arts, nonviolent activism, interfaith dialogue, and care practices for elders, children, and animals, to name only a few. These workshops are opportunities for learning and connection, but vital acts of practice, empowerment, and joy

This conference is also a gathering of stories of Dharma practitioners who have broken ground, transformed their communities, and applied the transformative abilities of the dharma in the face of injustice. We are deeply honored to hear

from monastics and laywomen who embody the Buddhist path with wisdom and compassion.

We are touched by the intergenerational presence at this gathering. Our collective liberation depends on our ability to include, listen, and learn from young women and gender-diverse practitioners to create new models of transformation. This year's conference includes panels that center their voices and experiences, challenging us to practice not just mindfulness, but also justice, equity, and collective care.

None of this would have been possible without the devoted and tireless efforts of our incredible conference planning committee. Please join me in expressing our heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Chua, Pek Chua, Professor Eunsu Cho, Lunah Kim, Hyeugun Chung, Darcie Price-Wallace, Cindy Rasicot and Venerable Lekshe, whose vision, labor, and care have brought this conference to life. From the earliest planning stages to this very moment, they have worked with to ensure that this gathering would be a deep forum for dialogue, a celebration, and nourishing gathering of body, mind, and heart. The International Conference Planning Committee, the Sarawak Conference Planning Team, the Paper Proposal Committee, and the Workshop Committee have all been incredible in their efforts to produce the 19th Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women Conference.

We are also deeply grateful to the Kuching Buddhist Society, our generous host organization, whose gracious hospitality and support have made this event possible. Your commitment to Buddhist women is a wonderful example of compassionate community in action. A special warm thank you to the hospitality team of the Waterfront Hotel which has been so gracious and all of the staff that has pulled out all the stops for us.

To our major donors, sponsors, and supporters, I want to extend my deepest gratitude. Your generosity ensures that Buddhist women—especially those from under-resourced regions—can have a seat at the table and a voice in this global dialogue and exchange. Your support is a profound act of selflessness, and we need this spirit of generosity more than ever.

As we begin this conference, I invite us to learn from each other, celebrate with old friends, and make new friends. May this be a time and space where you feel seen, inspired, and challenged. May it be a time and space to collaborate, celebrate, and plant new seeds of kindness, compassion, and deep friendship.

This conference is a continuation of the journey nearly four decades ago, and it will continue long after we return home. The friendships you forge, the teachings you receive, and the new collaborations you develop will become the causes and conditions for a more beautiful future.

Thank you all for your presence, for your practice, for your leadership, and for your commitment to sustaining the Dharma and empowering our communities.

Welcome to Sarawak. Welcome to Sakyadhita 2025.