

SIX DECADES OF GLOBAL BUDDHIST CONNECTION

The 60th Anniversary Celebration (1966–2026) of the World Buddhist Sangha Council and the Second Meeting of the Executive Committee for the 11th Term (2024–2029), to be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 28 November to 2 December 2026

The year 2026 marks a particularly significant milestone in the history of the World Buddhist Sangha Council (WBSC): sixty years since the organization was founded in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1966.

From its first international conference in Colombo six decades ago, the WBSC has gradually developed into an international Sangha forum connecting Buddhist monks and Buddhist communities from many countries, cultures, and traditions. This journey stands as a living testimony to the power of the Dhamma to transcend geographical, linguistic, and sectarian boundaries, bringing the followers of the Buddha closer together in a spirit of harmony, compassion, and wisdom.

To commemorate this historic milestone, the 60th Anniversary Celebration of the World Buddhist Sangha Council, together with the Second Meeting of the Executive Committee of the 11th General Conference term, is scheduled to be solemnly held in Sri Lanka from 28 November to 2 December 2026.

This is not merely an anniversary celebration. It is also an opportunity to look back upon six decades of the formation and development of an international movement for Sangha unity, while at the same time looking toward the future of world Buddhism in an era of profound change.

From Colombo 1966 to Sri Lanka 2026

The World Buddhist Sangha Council was officially established in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in May 1966, with the aspiration of creating an international forum for the Buddhist Sangha dedicated to protecting and propagating the Buddha-Dhamma, promoting harmony among Buddhist traditions, and contributing to world peace.

From the very beginning, the founders envisioned the WBSC not as an organization limited to a single Buddhist tradition or one country, but as a common

voice for the global Buddhist Sangha—a place where Theravāda, Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna, and other Buddhist traditions could meet in a spirit of mutual respect, dialogue, and harmony.

At the First General Conference in 1966, the Most Venerable Pandita Pimbure Sorata Thera was appointed the Founding Secretary-General. Of particular significance, the Conference unanimously adopted the “Nine Basic Points Unifying Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism,” thereby laying an important foundation for the ideal of unity among the major traditions of Buddhism.

Three years later, in 1969, the Second General Conference was held in Saigon, Vietnam. This marked an important milestone in the expansion of the WBSC from South Asia into the Buddhist communities of Southeast Asia, while also strengthening cooperation among international Sanghas.

In 1981, the Third General Conference was held in Taipei, Taiwan. Under the leadership of the Most Venerable Pai Sheng, a new era began in which East Asian Buddhism became increasingly active in the global movement for Sangha unity.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the WBSC network continued to expand into many countries across Asia, Europe, the Americas, and Oceania. The Council of Elders and the Executive Committee were strengthened in order to ensure continuity of leadership and broad representation of Buddhist Sangha communities.

Entering the twenty-first century, in addition to its traditional mission of uniting the Sangha and propagating the Dhamma, the WBSC has increasingly turned its attention to issues of global significance, including peace, ethics, environmental protection, social justice, and interfaith harmony.

In 2024, the 11th General Conference was successfully held in Auckland, New Zealand. The Conference once again affirmed the determination of the WBSC to promote global harmony, pay greater attention to younger generations, and make use of digital technologies in the propagation of the Dhamma in the modern age. And now, in 2026, after exactly six decades, the WBSC returns to Sri Lanka—the land where its journey began.

A Historic Return to the Place of Origin

The holding of the 60th Anniversary Celebration in Sri Lanka carries profound significance. It represents a return to the roots of the Council, to the place where

the first international gathering of the Buddhist Sangha took place in 1966.

After sixty years, the journey appears to complete a historic circle: from Colombo to the world, and from the world back to Sri Lanka.

According to the proposed program, the WBSC 60th Anniversary Celebration and the Second Meeting of the Executive Committee of the 11th General Conference term will take place from 28 November to 2 December 2026.

Activities will be held at the Nāgānanda International Institute for Buddhist Studies (NIIBS), in the sacred Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi area in Anuradhapura, and in Kandy.

The opening ceremony is scheduled to take place on 28 November at the Nāgānanda International Institute for Buddhist Studies in Kelaniya.

According to the announced program, the celebration may bring together approximately 600 delegates from 50 countries, representing the Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna traditions. In addition, approximately 500 members of the Sri Lankan Sangha, including leaders of the three major Nikāyas, are also expected to attend.

Invitations are also expected to be extended to heads of state from countries with strong Buddhist traditions, including the King of Bhutan.

The scale of the event demonstrates that the 60th Anniversary Celebration is not merely an internal gathering of one Buddhist organization. It has the potential to become a major international gathering of the Sangha and Buddhist communities, where many traditions come together under the light of the Dhamma.

Sri Lanka Prepares for the International Event

Preparations for the celebration began early, with cooperation among the World Buddhist Sangha Council, the Nāgānanda International Institute for Buddhist Studies, and the relevant Sri Lankan authorities.

An important meeting of the WBSC Organizing Committee was convened on 23 January 2026 at the Nāgānanda International Institute for Buddhist Studies. The meeting focused on planning and preparations for the 60th Anniversary Celebration, with NIIBS identified as one of the principal venues of the event.

Subsequent preparatory discussions were also conducted in the presence of distinguished members of the Maha Sangha, including the Most Venerable Dr. Maitipe Wimalasara Thera, Secretary-General of the World Buddhist Sangha Council; the Most Venerable Sooriyawewa Sumedha Thera, Director of the

Nāgānanda International Institute for Buddhist Studies; together with ministers, deputy ministers, and officials of Sri Lanka's Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs.

Of particular importance, on 24 February 2026, a special discussion concerning the organization of the event was held at the Presidential Secretariat under the chairmanship of His Excellency Anura Kumara Dissanayake, President of Sri Lanka.

The President emphasized that the 60th Anniversary Celebration of the WBSC is an event of national importance and affirmed the Sri Lankan Government's support for its organization.

To coordinate the necessary arrangements, the President directed the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee involving the Minister responsible for Buddhist affairs, representatives of the Presidential Secretariat, the Ministry of Defence, the Police, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other relevant government authorities.

The Government of Sri Lanka also regards hosting this event as an important opportunity to introduce the country's ancient Buddhist heritage to the world while strengthening international relations, cultural exchange, and diplomacy.

Six Decades – One Unchanging Ideal

Looking back at the journey from Colombo in 1966, Saigon in 1969, Taipei in 1981, the periods of international expansion during the following decades, Auckland in 2024, and Sri Lanka in 2026, one can clearly see an ideal that has remained constant throughout the history of the WBSC:

To unite the Sangha in the service of the Dhamma and humanity.

The world has changed enormously during the past sixty years. Scientific and technological advances have brought people closer together in terms of communication and access to information. Yet wars, conflicts, religious divisions, environmental crises, social inequality, and new ethical challenges continue to confront humanity.

In such circumstances, the Buddha's teachings on compassion, non-violence, wisdom, and mutual understanding remain profoundly relevant.

For this reason, unity among Buddhist traditions is not merely an internal matter for Buddhism.

When members of the Sangha from many countries and traditions are able to meet in a spirit of harmony, respect differences, and seek common values together, they also offer to the world a practical message about the possibility of living together in peace.

The 60th Anniversary Celebration in Sri Lanka is therefore both an occasion to pay tribute to the pioneering elders who laid the foundations of the WBSC and an opportunity for the present generation to reflect upon its responsibility for the future

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From a conference in Colombo to a Buddhist network extending across many continents, sixty years of WBSC history have demonstrated that seeds planted with wisdom and harmony can continue to grow from one generation to another.

Looking Toward the Future of the Global Buddhist Sangha

The founders of the World Buddhist Sangha Council laid the foundations of the organization upon essential values:

Wisdom – Harmony – Unity – Compassion – Peace.

Sixty years later, these noble values continue to serve as guiding principles for the journey of the global Buddhist Sangha in an age of profound and rapid transformation.

The WBSC 60th Anniversary Celebration in Sri Lanka in 2026 is not only an occasion to look back upon a historic journey, pay tribute to the contributions of the pioneering elders, and recognize past achievements. It is also an opportunity for Buddhist leaders from around the world to turn their vision toward the future and reflect upon the role and responsibility of the Sangha in the twenty-first century.

In particular, the central theme of this year's Conference is: “Artificial Intelligence and Buddhism.”

This is a highly relevant theme for our time, as Artificial Intelligence is exerting an increasingly profound influence on education, communications, culture, social life, and the ways in which human beings receive and acquire knowledge.

In the face of both the opportunities and challenges brought about by new technologies, the Conference raises several questions of practical importance for the future of Buddhism: *How can Artificial Intelligence and modern technology be*

applied to the propagation of the Dhamma without losing the spiritual depth of the Buddha's teachings? How can technology remain a means of serving humanity rather than becoming something upon which human beings increasingly depend?

And how can technological intelligence be illuminated and guided by human wisdom, ethics, compassion, and a sense of responsibility?

As younger generations increasingly live, study, and communicate within digital environments, bringing the Buddha's teachings to them through new means has become an inevitable necessity.

However, along with the capacity to make use of technology, the Sangha and Buddhist communities must remain all the more committed to preserving the fundamental foundations of the Dhamma: *Sīla – Samādhi – Paññā; a life of mindfulness; compassion; the principle of non-harming; and inner transformation.*

The Conference also offers an opportunity for the Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna Buddhist traditions to continue strengthening mutual understanding and cooperation, and to work together in addressing the common challenges facing humanity, including war, conflict, environmental crises, social inequality, loneliness, and the ethical consequences arising from the rapid development of science and technology.

From Sri Lanka—a land that holds a special place in the history of the preservation and transmission of Theravāda Buddhism—the bell of the 60th Anniversary Celebration of the World Buddhist Sangha Council will once again resound as a reminder of the ideal entrusted to future generations by its founders in 1966: *to illuminate through wisdom, to connect through compassion, and to serve the cause of peace for humanity through the spirit of harmony.*

Sixty years is a journey worthy of deep appreciation, yet it is only one segment of the long journey of the Dhamma.

May the 60th Anniversary Celebration of the World Buddhist Sangha Council, the Second Meeting of the Executive Committee of the 11th General Conference Term, and the Conference under the theme “Artificial Intelligence and Buddhism,” to be held in Sri Lanka in 2026, open new directions for the propagation of the Dhamma in the digital age; further strengthen the bonds of spiritual friendship among members of the Sangha from all Buddhist traditions; expand cooperation among Buddhist communities throughout the world; and affirm that, in an age of unprecedented technological development, *Artificial Intelligence can truly be meaningful only when it is guided by human wisdom, ethics, compassion, and the*

spirit of service to all sentient beings.

In this spirit, the World Buddhist Sangha Council continues its mission of bringing the Buddha's message of *Compassion – Wisdom – Harmony – Peace* to humanity, so that scientific progress may not only make the world more intelligent, but may also help human beings become *more mindful, more compassionate, and more responsible toward one another and toward this planet.*

Namo Sakyamuni Buddha.

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News compiled from the official WBSC 2026 website <https://www.wbsc2026.com/>