**Connecting Order, Movement and College:**

**The first meeting of the International Council**

On the evening of 22 August 2011 at Padmaloka, Bhante Sangharakshita addressed a group of 36 Order members\* representing the Triratna Buddhist Order and Community, giving his blessing to the first gathering of the International Council.

This is the first time in the history of the Triratna Tradition that a truly international group of Order members representing all three strands of Triratna (Order, Movement and Preceptors’ College) and all six Areas (USA/Canada, India, South Pacific, Latin America, Mainland Europe and UK/Ireland) has come together in this way.

What followed was five days of intense, lively discussion, workshops, presentations, practice, ritual, sharing and building of friendships and consensus all focused on ensuring the future of the Triratna Buddhist Order and Community.

The meeting was opened by Bhante, who encouraged the Council to be bold in its approach to decision-making. He likened his relationship to the Council to a retired gardener, sitting in his garden listening to the bees working away together harmoniously in a near-by hive – close enough to be heard, but able to work autonomously.

The following morning, Dhammarati set the historical context for the meeting drawing on earlier work and thinking about the future of the Order and the Movement from Vishvapani and Subhuti.

On the basis of this and the ‘Working Practices’ document, (based on 12 months of discussions with Order members across the world), the Council then worked together to develop the principles that would guide the remainder of the meeting.

The rest of the programme came out of the first morning’s discussions and reflected the wide range of issues put forward to Council participants by members of the Order, Movement and College across all of the six Triratna Areas.

Three major areas of focus emerged including the development and communication of a ‘whole-of-life’ Shared System of Training that would more clearly define the Triratna Buddhist tradition, improved ways of engaging the Order and new ways of funding the Order & Movement.

The next two days focused on more in-depth explorations of these themes through workshops – in smaller groups and all together - facilitated by Maitrisara and Viveka. This work was supported by presentations from Subhuti, Parami and Vajragupta.

Where required, the Council came together to consider its support for various proposals that come out of the workshops, with a view to gauging the level of consensus. All the proposals for further work on the priority themes that were presented to the Council received unanimous support.

On the final full day, the Council agreed three working groups (Shared System of Practice, Engaging the Order – Building Better Channels and Funding the Order & Movement) to take the initial ideas forward together with next steps. A fourth group developed plans for communicating the outcomes of the first meeting to the Order, Movement and College.

It is difficult to capture in words participants’ feelings about the meeting, but the reporting out on the last morning reflected a collective mixture of excitement, inspiration, relief and most importantly confidence in the future of the Triratna Buddhist Order and Community and the on-going realisation of Bhante’s vision for a new Buddhist tradition.

Detailed information on the meeting is being developed by the Council’s organising team and will continue to be communicated as it becomes available to the Order, the Movement and the College through its representatives on the Council.

The International Council Steering Group\*\* will meet regularly over the next 2 years to monitor the progress of the working groups.

The next formal meeting of the International Council will take place in 2013.

\*The first International Council participants:

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| **Area** | **Order** | **Movement** | **College** |
| UK/Ireland | Prajnagupta  Lokeshvara | Saddhanandi  Vajragupta | Satyaraja |
| USA/Canada | Ashokashri  Shantinayaka | Viryalila  Viveka | Viradhamma  Karunadevi |
| India | Amrutdeep  Aryaketu | Abhayaraja  Nagaketu | Yashosaghar  Karunamaya |
| South Pacific | Nagasuri  Guhyasiddhi | Sudaya | Sanghadevi  Buddhadasa |
| Latin America/ Spain | Saddhajoti  Vajranatha | Upeksamati | Moksananda |
| Mainland Europe | Parina | Jnanacandra  Amogharatna | Vajragita  Mahamati |
| Steering Group | Parami  Mahamati |  | Dhammarati  Padmasuri  Saddhaloka |
|  |  |  |  |
| *Organising Team* | *Maitrisara*  *Vidyatara*  *Jnanarakshita* |  |  |

\*\* The International Council Steering Group

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| **Order** | **Movement** | **College** |
| Parami (International Order Convening Team)  Mahamati (International Order Convening Team) | Vajragupta (UK/Ireland)  Viveka (USA/Canada)  Abhayaraja (India) | Dhammarati  Padmasuri  Saddhaloka |