

# Toward a New Era of Dialogue: Humanism Explored

by Daisaku Ikeda

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Commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), I would like to take this opportunity to offer some philosophical perspectives and concrete proposals to further the search for world peace and the creative coexistence of humankind.

Before doing so, however, let me express my heartfelt condolences and prayers for all those who lost their lives in the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami at the end of last year. Our hearts go out to all those who struggle to overcome the unimaginable suffering and grief that has afflicted them.

I strongly hope that the international community will cooperate to provide the kind of sustained and coordinated support that will enable the communities that suffered such enormous damage to fully recover.

I also pray that recovery and reconstruction efforts will progress so that all the individuals and families in regions affected by this unprecedented natural disaster will be able to reestablish lives of security and hope as quickly as possible.

## The Crisis We Face

In the years since the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, the world has experienced an extraordinary heightening of tensions. As governments tighten security measures to forestall the terrorist attacks that could occur at any time, the lives of many ordinary citizens are filled with a sense of fear and insecurity. There is no sign of a return to normality.

While conditions during the Cold War were in some ways similar, there is something even more unfathomable about the current threat. It is impossible to identify the potential perpetrators of terrorist acts, and there is no clear sense of what would constitute a resolution to the situation. There is a gnawing sense of vulnerability which even the most aggressive military actions or intrusive security measures are powerless to alleviate.

The situation in Iraq likewise remains chaotic. Despite the transfer of sovereignty to a provisional government last June, military clashes and terror attacks continue to occur throughout the country, and many question the chances of success for the January 30 elections for the national assembly.

Further, efforts to realize peace in the Middle East remain deadlocked. Talks on the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons program are stalemated. Together with a large number

of regional conflicts, these circumstances have prompted pessimistic voices to warn that we are in danger of repeating the war and violence that characterized the twentieth century.

In many countries the priority accorded to national security has in recent years fueled a drive to expand armaments. Increasingly, domestic security concerns are being used to justify curtailment of rights and freedoms. Meanwhile, energy and attention have been distracted from international efforts to address such global issues as poverty and ecological degradation. The resultant aggravation of threats to people's lives and dignity are another tragic outcome of terrorism and efforts to suppress it.

How can twenty-first-century humankind overcome the crises that face us?

There is, of course, no simple solution, no "magic wand" we can wave to make it all better. The way forward will be perilous as it requires finding an appropriate response to the kind of violence that rejects all attempts at engagement or dialogue.

Even so, there is no need to fall into meaningless and unproductive pessimism. All these problems are caused by human beings, which means that they must have a human solution. However long the effort takes, so long as we do not abandon the work of unknotting the tangled threads of these interrelated issues, we can be certain of finding a way forward.

The core of such efforts must be to bring forth the full potential of dialogue. So long as human history continues, we will face the perennial challenge of realizing, maintaining and strengthening peace through dialogue, of making dialogue the sure and certain path to peace. We must uphold and proclaim this conviction without cease, whatever coldly knowing smiles or cynical critiques may greet us.

Here I am reminded of the words of the poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861--1941), whose writings have long inspired my affection and respect:

Asks the Possible to the Impossible, "Where is your dwelling place?"  
"In the dreams of the impotent," comes the answer. [\[1\]](#)

## A Whirlwind of Dialogue

As mentioned earlier, this year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the SGI. The year 1975 was also a time of deepening conflict and division in the world. The aftershocks of the fourth Arab--Israeli War (1973) and the war in Viet Nam were still being felt; the first summit of leading industrialized countries was held in that year to strengthen the unity of the western bloc, while in the communist bloc, the confrontation between China and the Soviet Union was escalating ominously.

I dedicated the year leading up to the founding of the SGI to intensive efforts in dialogue. My first visits to both China and the Soviet Union were made in 1974. Keenly aware of the potentially explosive tensions, I met repeatedly with the top leadership of both countries, engaging them in earnest dialogue.

In Japan at the time, the Soviet Union and its people were regarded with violent hostility. There were many who criticized my decision to travel there, asking what purpose could possibly be served by a person of religion going to a country that officially denied the value or validity of religion. But my sincere belief, as a Buddhist, was that no vision of peace was possible that didn't recognize and include the one-third of the world that was the communist bloc. It was crucial, in my view, that a breakthrough be found as soon as possible.

On my first visit to China in May 1974, I witnessed the people of Beijing building a vast network of underground shelters against the eventuality of a Soviet attack. When I met, some three months later, with Soviet Premier Alexei N. Kosygin (1904--80), I conveyed to him the concerns I had encountered in China about Soviet intentions and asked him straight out if the Soviet Union was planning to attack China. The premier responded that the Soviet Union had no intention of either attacking or isolating China.

I brought this message with me when I next visited China in December of that year, conveying it to the Chinese leadership. It was also on this visit that I met Premier Zhou Enlai (1898--1976), discussing with him the importance of enhancing and strengthening friendship between China and Japan, and of working together for the betterment of the entire world.

In January of 1975, I visited the United States and presented to the United Nations a petition with more than ten million signatures calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons gathered by the youth membership of the Soka Gakkai in Japan. I also had the opportunity to exchange views with U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

It was in the midst of such feverish efforts to promote dialogue that the SGI was founded thirty years ago on this day, January 26, 1975. The inaugural meeting was held on the island of Guam, site of fierce fighting in World War II, and was attended by the representatives of fifty-one countries and territories. From its inception, the SGI has sought to draw on people's energy and creativity to forge an effective grassroots movement for peace.

Since that first gathering, the members of the SGI have consistently upheld the conviction that dialogue represents the sure and certain path to peace. I have also committed myself to "human diplomacy," the kind of diplomacy that seeks to unite a divided world in the spirit of friendship and trust, and to promoting broad-based, grassroots exchanges in the cultural and educational fields.

Seeking to look beyond national and ideological differences, I have engaged in dialogue with leaders in various fields from throughout the world. I have met and shared thoughts with people of many different philosophical, cultural and religious backgrounds, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Confucianism. My consistent belief, reinforced through this experience, is that the basis for the kind of dialogue required in the twenty-first century must be humanism--one that sees good in that which unites and brings us together, evil in that which divides and sunders us.

As I review my own efforts to foster dialogue in this way, I gain a renewed sense of the urgent need to redirect the energies of dogmatism and fanaticism--the cause of so much deadly conflict--toward a more humanistic outlook. In a world rent by terrorism and retaliatory strikes, by conflicts premised on ethnic and religious differences, such an

attempt may appear to some a hopeless quest. But even so I believe that we must continue to make efforts toward this goal.

Here I am not suggesting humanism as something that goes head-to-head with dogmatism or fanaticism in a sterile confrontation between competing "isms."

The real essence and practice of humanism is found in heartfelt, one-to-one dialogue. Be it summit diplomacy or the various interactions of private citizens in different lands, genuine dialogue has the kind of intensity described by the great twentieth-century humanist and philosopher Martin Buber (1878--1965) as an encounter "on the narrow ridge" [2] in which the slightest inattention could result in a precipitous fall. Dialogue is indeed this kind of intense, high-risk encounter.

I believe that the analogy of trimtabs--small, adjustable flaps on the wings of airplanes and the keels of boats--is useful. As designer and philosopher R. Buckminster Fuller pointed out, a trimtab on a ship's rudder can be operated by the unaided power of a single individual; it can facilitate the movement of the rudder, thus enabling a change in direction of a massive ship.[3] Humanism can play a similar role, redirecting the course of global society.

As ripples of dialogue multiply and spread, they have the potential to generate the kind of sea change that will redirect the forces of fanaticism and dogmatism. The cumulative effect of such seemingly small efforts is, I believe, sufficient to redirect the current of the times--just as a small trimtab can adjust the course of a massive ship or plane. What is crucial is the hard and patient work of challenging, through the spiritual struggle of intense encounter and dialogue, the assumptions and attachments that bind and drive people.

## The Snares of Fanaticism

Fanaticism and dogmatism come in many forms. Some may be quick to associate these with monotheistic religion, when in fact they can be found across the full spectrum of human activity. Buddhism, though often thought to be relatively immune to such extremism, is by no means entirely free from its snares, as I will discuss later. Nor, of course, is fanaticism limited to religion. The degree to which many of the political ideologies of the twentieth century were caught in this same trap is something that is fresh in our memories.

To some extent any ideology (in the widest sense of the term) embodies an orthodoxy or set way of understanding the world. We need therefore to develop a better understanding of both the positive and negative aspects of such orthodoxies, or "isms."

To the degree that an orthodoxy can serve as a norm to guide people's actions to constructive ends, it can be a positive thing. At the same time, however, such "isms" can start to bind people's otherwise unfettered thinking and judgment to a single, exclusive point of reference. When this tendency gets out of control, abstract "isms" can end up holding thrall over real people and their lives. It is in the nature of orthodoxies that they are capable of careening off in this direction at any time.

Fanaticism arises when this destructive aspect has ballooned out of all proportion. It can lead to a situation in which human life is grotesquely devalued and death--both one's own

and others'--is glorified. This explains the fact that the twentieth century was both an era of ideology and one of unprecedented slaughter.

In contrast to these kinds of "isms" or orthodoxies, the most prominent feature of humanism is that it does not seek to provide externally defined norms of behavior. Rather, it places central stress on the free and spontaneous workings of the human spirit and on autonomous judgment and decision-making.

Certainly, humanism upholds humanity--both in the concrete sense and as an abstract quality--as its core standard. But it does not seek to establish on that basis a fixed set of rules to guide all judgments and actions.

The renowned cultural anthropologist Eiichiro Ishida (1903--68) was once asked to provide a universal definition of "humanity." Noting that cultural relativism makes this difficult, he struggled for the right words before finally offering this formulation: "In the end, it becomes a matter of what you yourself feel to be human" (trans.). [\[4\]](#)

While this may appear rather vague, it perhaps illustrates the nature of the inner-motivated, autonomous process which I am attempting to describe. But this absolutely does not signify an unprincipled, irresponsible "anything goes" type of attitude. It is when we are confronted by painful dilemmas and difficult decisions that our capacity to remain faithful to a process of free and autonomous decision-making--to be true to what you yourself feel to be human--is tested to the limit.

## "Principles are made for people!"

The life of Albert Einstein (1879--1955) illustrates this point powerfully and poignantly. A man of extraordinarily deep commitment to peace, Einstein was, as a Jew, subjected to relentless harassment and threats of violence at the hands of the Nazis. After intense inner struggle Einstein came to the decision that actively opposing the Nazis was the only means of averting the worst possible outcome. This was the same Einstein who deeply admired Mahatma Gandhi and who had earlier declared, "I would rather be cut to pieces than shoot someone on command." If this statement is interpreted dogmatically, it might appear that his change in stance compromised his principles. But, as he explained, "principles are made for men and not men for principles." [\[5\]](#)

Here it is important to keep several points in mind.

The first is that Einstein was forced to the conclusion that failing to resist the outrageous, unilateral violence of the Nazis would be tantamount to supporting their destructive rampage.

The second is that his endorsement of the decision to manufacture (although not to use) nuclear weapons grew from fear of the dread consequences were the Nazis to succeed in developing them first. When, against his wishes, nuclear weapons were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he regretted his involvement, later describing it as the "one great mistake in my life...." [\[6\]](#)

The third is that this sense of guilt and responsibility drove his redoubled efforts as a peace activist, in the postwar years, to work for nuclear abolition and the establishment of

world government.

I believe that the consistent theme running through the complex inner drama of Einstein's life is that each of these difficult, indeed perilous, decisions was an embodiment of the ceaseless quest to locate that which we feel to be human, the universal standard of humanity alluded to above. The essence and proof of humanism, in my view, is inner conflict and struggle in pursuit of the good. In the midst of the maelstrom of Nazism, Einstein repeatedly declared, "We must change people's hearts," [7] something which cannot be achieved without this kind of inner struggle.

Einstein's philosophy after the war was not, perhaps, one of nonviolence in the very strictest sense of the word. Nevertheless I think that his ultimate goal shared profound commonalities with the nonviolent struggles of Mahatma Gandhi. This is clear from the praise that Einstein in his later years offered Gandhi, calling him "the greatest political genius of our age" (trans.). [8]

Einstein's penetrating axiom that principles are made for people and not people for principles offers a simple and direct expression of what might be considered the lynchpin of humanism. But as the struggles of this giant of the twentieth century prove, nothing is harder to put into practice. Religions and political ideologies have all too often made people subservient and ultimately sacrificed them on the altar of inflexible rules and abstract principles. This inversion of the relative importance of people and principles derives from a deeply rooted tendency in human nature that seems to drive us into the arms of dogmatism and fanaticism. The historical record in this regard is truly chilling.

## The Case of Buddhism

In the Buddhist scriptures we find these words: "Shakyamuni taught that the shallow is easy to embrace, but the profound is difficult. To discard the shallow and seek the profound is the way of a person of courage." [9] People seem too easily to lose sight of and forget their own capacity for courage, to cling and become captive to a particular dogma. We seem to possess an instinctive weakness that drives us to the shallow and easy choice of unquestioning, blind belief in dogma.

There the snares of extremism await, ready to take advantage of the weakness and folly that are found in all people, where pandering and other stratagems are used to stir up such destructive tendencies as hatred, fury, jealousy and arrogance. This kind of dogmatism works to degrade, weaken and stultify the human spirit. It stands at the opposite pole to humanism.

The controversy between the members of the SGI and the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood that flared up in 1990 is a case in point. In its essence a struggle against the perils of religious authoritarianism, it embodies a movement for religious reform that is at its heart the struggle of humanism against anti-humanism. Hiding behind their assumed authority as priests, the Nichiren Shoshu establishment sought to blind others to their corruption and degradation, and to crush and oppress the spirits of lay believers. This indeed represents the worst form of anti-humanism.

For the members of the SGI, to have allowed ourselves to be cowed and defeated by this would have been to surrender our humanity. The implications of this controversy go

beyond the scope of a single school of Buddhism. Rooted in the universal spirit of human dignity--that which we feel to be human--we believe it would be a disservice to humanity if we were to retreat on this issue.

When the priesthood issue first arose, the educator Taro Hori (1920--95) (at the time president of Newton College, Shiga) offered this analysis: "This represents a challenge to the authoritarianism and supplicant faith lurking in each person's heart. By overcoming this, each member [of the SGI] will grow and develop to an astonishing degree" (trans.).

[\[10\]](#)

In the years since this issue first surfaced, through our struggles against corrupt religious authority, members of the SGI have, both as individuals and as an organization, outgrown the restraints of our past selves, strengthening and tempering the hearts of the courageous. It is something of which I believe we can be justly proud. This pride stems from the confidence that our struggle ties into the larger challenge--inherent in the nature of civilization itself--of constructing a genuine and robust humanism.

## Exploring Humanism

In the proposal I made three years ago, I set out some Buddhist perspectives on the philosophy and practice of humanism. I would like to take this opportunity to further develop those ideas, specifically by offering the following three propositions as essential elements of a Buddhist-inspired humanism.

- (1) All things are relative and mutable.
- (2) It is therefore essential that we develop the ability to discern the relative and mutable nature of reality, as well as the kind of robust autonomy that will not be overwhelmed by it.
- (3) Based on this discernment and autonomy, we accept all that is human and do not discriminate; we refuse to stereotype or circumscribe people on the basis of ideology, nationality, ethnicity, etc.; we are therefore determined to actively pursue all avenues of dialogue, never permitting them to be closed.

The first two of these propositions--the relativity and mutability of all things and the importance of developing the discernment to recognize this--are easily identifiable as being rooted in such Buddhist concepts as the "three Dharma seals" (Jpn. *samboin*).

The impermanence of all phenomena (*shogyo-mujo*) explains that all things, events and experiences can be understood as an unbroken continuity of change and transformation. Because everything changes, there is nothing that has a fixed, independent existence or substance (*shoho-muga*). The enlightened state realized through the fully developed capacity to discern this reality is referred to as the tranquility of nirvana (*nehan-jakujo*). This describes the initial awakening achieved by Shakyamuni when he realized that all things arise in the context of their interrelatedness; this is a world woven of the rich threads of diversity, as all things exist in a web of interdependence, each serving as the cause or connection by which all other things come into being.

From the perspective of the understanding of Buddhism that has prevailed in much of the world, the third proposition I set forth here--the positive commitment to action and dialogue--may seem somewhat surprising. It may appear contrary to the contemplative image generally associated with Buddhism as expressed by such concepts as the three Dharma seals.

Other early Buddhist concepts stress that enlightenment is beyond the power of words or intellection. This emphasis on the limits of language would seem, relative to French scientist and philosopher Albert Jacquard's formulation of "dialogue comprising moments of silence as well as words" (trans.), [11] to place a much greater emphasis on silence. The treatment of silence not as a void or absence but as a rich fecundity is an important characteristic of Buddhism.

It is hardly surprising that many people--faced with the apparent deadlock afflicting Western civilization, whose dramatic development has always been based on the centrality accorded rationality and language (*logos*)--are seeking healing in things that are seen to be Buddhist and which offer a contrast to this language-centered worldview.

But insofar as the ability to use language remains the distinguishing attribute of the human species, we cannot remain silent and hope to realize the ideal of humanism. In this sense, we have no choice but to immerse ourselves in humanity, to commit ourselves to the ocean of dialogue.

## A Mark of Honor

In more concrete terms, this means directly confronting the evil and unhappiness that are an inevitable aspect of human existence. Vimalakirti's statement, "When living beings are ill, the bodhisattva is ill; when all living beings are cured, the bodhisattva is cured" (trans.), [12] expresses the resolve of the altruistic bodhisattva to undertake this very challenge. It is a resolve that figures centrally in Mahayana Buddhism. The Mahayana tradition, the tradition that flows from the Lotus Sutra to Nichiren and which informs the practice of SGI members, strongly encourages a dynamic bodhisattva practice of dialogue and engagement. (It should be noted that in doing so, it builds on, and does not deny, the inner tranquility of enlightenment.)

It is because I believe that this dynamism is an important aspect of Buddhism that I cited the following image of Shakyamuni when I spoke at Harvard University in 1993: "meeting others with joy, approaching them with a bright and welcoming countenance." [13] I would imagine that this dynamism resonates powerfully with the "cosmic religious feelings" [14] that Einstein often spoke of.

In light of the above, I would like to propose the following guidelines for humanism in action: Recognizing that all is change within a framework of interdependence, we of course see harmony and oneness as expressions of our interconnectedness. But we can even appreciate contradiction and conflict in the same way. Thus the struggle against evil--a struggle that issues from the inner effort to master our own contradictions and conflicts--should be seen as a difficult yet unavoidable trial that we must undergo in the effort to create a greater and deeper sense of connection.

If we experience connection positively as a sense of harmony or oneness, we experience the same connection negatively in conflict. In that they are both aspects of connection, they can be understood as bearing an equal value. To the degree, however, that we recognize the reality of life as a struggle and understand that it is through struggle that our humanity is tempered and strengthened, a courageous engagement with conflict is even more crucial. In the Buddhist tradition, this is the mark of honor of the bodhisattva. Refusing to discriminate on the basis of stereotypes or imposed limitations, we can recognize the underlying oneness of positive and negative connection, and engage with the full force of our lives in the kind of dialogue that will transform even conflict into positive connection. It is in this challenge that the true contribution of a Buddhist-based humanism is to be found.

That has been the conviction that has supported me in my efforts over the years.

When I called in 1968 for the normalization of China--Japan relations, or made the efforts described earlier to ease tensions between China and the Soviet Union, I was motivated by the confidence that even the fiercest conflicts do not continue forever. So long as there are people who raise their voices for peace, there is hope.

In 1996, relations between Cuba and the United States were at a particularly low point, following the downing in February of two private planes by Cuban fighter jets and the tightening of the U.S. economic embargo. When in June I visited the U.S. and Cuba, where I met and had a candid exchange with President Fidel Castro, I was likewise motivated by a humanistic faith that the confrontational relationship between the two countries was not fixed or fated to continue indefinitely into the future.

What greater proof of the relative and mutable nature of reality than the fall of the Berlin Wall, perhaps the most prominent symbol of a Cold War that often seemed destined to continue forever. I recall visiting West Germany in October 1961 and standing in front of the Brandenburg Gate. At the time, I shared my belief, based on my faith in people's courage and yearning for peace, that the wall would come down within thirty years. Remarkably, it was just twenty-eight years later that the Berlin Wall was in fact dismantled by the ordinary citizens living in both sides of that divided nation.

It has been my pleasure twice to meet with President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, and I consider him a valued friend. He describes the process by which seemingly intractable realities were challenged and the apartheid system brought down:

Many in the international community, observing from a distance how our society defied the prophets of doom and their predictions of endless conflict, have spoken of a miracle. Yet those who have been closely involved in the transition will know that it has been the product of human decision. [\[15\]](#)

This is a truly pregnant observation. Historic transformations that strike third-party observers as miraculous are in fact wrought by those who have the wisdom to discern the relative, mutable nature of reality and possess the will to initiate action based on a clear vision of a better future.

## Looking Beyond Stereotypes

One of the core concerns regarding the current situation in Iraq is that the conflict will become entrenched and develop into a full-scale confrontation between opposing worldviews, that it will become the spark for a clash of civilizations.

To prevent a descent into such a quagmire, it is vital that we not conflate specific impulses to violence with the cultural traditions of whole civilizations. We must be constantly on guard against the stereotyped, deterministic approach to others that, in fact, constitutes the core of all extremist philosophies, the very snares of dogmatism.

In any society, in any country, in any civilization, the vast majority of people reject extremist views. And it is only a tiny minority that harbor hegemonic ambitions to impose their culture or legal system on other countries.

Five years ago, in 2000, I published a dialogue with Iranian-born Professor Majid Tehranian of the University of Hawai'i in which we discussed and compared the Buddhist and Islamic traditions. Professor Tehranian noted the persistence of widespread prejudice against Islam, the misconception that it is somehow violent or threatening. He stressed, for example, that the true meaning of *jihad* is an inner struggle waged by individuals in the quest for spiritual elevation. He also spoke of the policies of accommodation toward people of other faiths under the Ottoman Turks and the historical reality that such European cities as Sarajevo and Cordoba enjoyed religious pluralism and flourished under Muslim rule. We agreed that at the core of Islamic civilization is to be found--not intolerance--but an aspiring to the universal and a respect for diversity.

Starting in February, publication will begin of a serialized dialogue between myself and Nur Yalman, a professor of cultural anthropology at Harvard University originally from Turkey. The realities and spirituality of Islamic society are among the topics we will cover in this dialogue, which we hope will contribute in some way to opening the path toward a global civilization based on the peaceful coexistence of all humankind.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of meeting with many distinguished individuals from throughout the Islamic world, from the Middle East, Asia and Africa. Through these encounters I have sensed a deep-seated yearning for peace, and this has reinforced my faith in the great majority of Muslims who seek harmonious coexistence.

The SGI as a whole has been actively participating in interfaith dialogue in various forums. Immediately following the September 11 terror attacks, for example, we joined representatives of the Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Buddhist faiths in a dialogue convened by the European Academy of Arts and Sciences. Further, SGI-affiliated institutes such as the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century and the Institute of Oriental Philosophy have been actively engaged in efforts in interfaith and cross-cultural dialogue. All these endeavors seek to contribute to the search for a path to peace, perspectives that will enable the resolution of the complex of global challenges.

The *2004 Human Development Report*, issued by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), is focused on the theme of cultural liberty. It contains important insights into the nature of coercive movements that use violence or threats to force their views on others or to establish cultural domination. The report notes that the focus of such coercive movements "is not on solving real grievances but on using ostensible grievances as

rallying cries." [16]

As the report makes clear, it is important that we have a keen awareness that people are not moved to extreme acts simply because they belong to a certain religion or nationality: "Movements of cultural domination also target members of their own community by denigrating and suppressing dissenting opinions and questioning integrity and loyalty (purity of faith or patriotism)." [17] In other words, such movements will even turn against those whom they claim as members of the same group, religion or nationality.

It is for this reason that unilateral military measures are not an effective response to violent and extremist movements, as they can in fact end up increasing sympathy and support for such movements among the general population. It is crucial that persistent efforts be made to remove the underlying causes of social instability, the grievances on which extremist groups feed.

## Human Rights Education

Here education holds the key.

When properly implemented (when it is not, that is, merely a tool for social control as was the case in pre-1945 militarist Japan), education is a powerful force for the positive transformation of individuals and society as a whole. Education for global citizenship can help transform humankind's long-standing culture of war into a culture of peace. It challenges us to fulfill our genuine potential as users of language (*Homo loquens*). The United Nations can serve as a powerful coordinating focus for such efforts.

The World Programme for Human Rights Education, initiated in January 2005, provides a vital opportunity in this regard. The need for ongoing global efforts for human rights education has been a long-standing concern of mine; in a written statement to the UN Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held four years ago in Durban, South Africa, I urged that efforts be made to this end. The SGI has worked with other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies and the representatives of UN member states to encourage the adoption of this program. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights adopted a recommendation for such a program in April 2004; it was formally established by a resolution of the UN General Assembly in December of that year. The program will focus in its first three years (2005--07) on integrating human rights issues into the curricula of primary and secondary schools.

The SGI worked to support the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995--2004) through the international exhibition "Human Rights in Today's World: Toward a Century of Hope." Plans are currently under way for a follow-up exhibition to be held in venues throughout the world in support of the new program.

The year 2005 also marks the start of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, something which the SGI has called for and worked toward in collaboration with other members of international civil society. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the lead agency for the promotion of the decade, describes its goal as "a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from education and learn the values, behavior and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation."

This is obviously not limited to environmental education but has a much broader scope. It must take into consideration such global challenges as poverty alleviation and peace, while laying the foundation for our joint efforts to build a sustainable global society that we can leave as a proud legacy to future generations.

In that sense, human rights education and education for sustainable development reflect intertwined concerns and objectives. Global society should seize upon these two UN-centered initiatives as an important opportunity to set a positive direction for humanity in the twenty-first century. I call on all parties to work for their success.

## A Primordial Encounter

Humanism cannot be strictly limited to the human. Understanding this is essential if we are to establish the practice of humanism under the conditions that face us in the contemporary world.

Here I would like to cite again the words of Martin Buber whose philosophy of dialogue was powerfully expressed in his work *I and Thou*, which continues to shine as an enduring classic more than eighty years after it was written.

In this work, Buber uses the unusual formulations "I--It" and "I--You" to contrast different ways we relate to the world. The distinction between the subjective and objective realms--the dichotomy that lies at the heart of Western modernity--is seen as I--It, whereas I--You refers to the kind of encounter and relation that escapes that superficial level to engage the complete being on a far more essential dimension.

Buber states, "All actual life is encounter." [18] He seeks to tear away the false constructs of I--It which cover modern civilization and to reveal the reality of You. By Buber's lights, the I needs the context of I--You to truly be; the I must exist for the You to be.

This way of thinking closely resembles the Buddhist concept of dependent origination (Jpn. *engi*), demonstrating the universality of Buber's vision of dialogue.

Let us listen to the quiet words with which Buber addresses us:

Three are the spheres in which the world of relation arises.

The first: life with nature. Here the relation vibrates in the dark and remains below language. The creatures stir across from us, but they are unable to come to us, and the You we say to them sticks to the threshold of language.

The second: life with men. Here the relation is manifest and enters language. We can give and receive the You.

The third: life with spiritual beings. Here the relation is wrapped in a cloud but reveals itself, it lacks but creates language. We hear no You and yet feel addressed; we answer--creating, thinking, acting... [19]

The first point that commands our attention is the earnestness with which Buber grapples with our nature as beings who use language (*Homo loquens*). His positioning of language as the necessary means and vehicle for dialogue is well balanced, neither undervaluing

nor overvaluing it. He of course avoids the excessive faith in language that is often an underlying factor in the development of dogmatism and fanaticism. He does not, however, question language in the way that many later followers of structuralism would.

Instead Buber scrupulously outlines the image of *Homo loquens* whose unique linguistic powers enable us to weave a subject-subject relationship (I--You) with people, the world of nature and the divine.

In this regard, I am reminded of a story told by the world-renowned novelist Chingiz Aitmatov. A good friend, Aitmatov and I have, over the course of numerous meetings and exchanges of views, conducted a dialogue that was published a number of years ago as "Ode to the Grand Spirit" (trans.). One day, Aitmatov was visited by a German journalist involved in a project to create a museum in space in which a wide range of materials representative of human civilization would be archived on microfilm and other formats. The journalist had read and been impressed by the dialogue, and planned to include it in the museum. He requested a brief statement from Aitmatov to be included with the book. After giving the matter careful thought, Aitmatov wrote the following words: "There is life hidden within stones. Only we human beings can give meaning to all things in the cosmos through thought and words" (trans.). [20] This is what I am referring to when I write of our destiny as *Homo loquens*.

The second thing I would like to note about Buber's analysis is that, while following Jewish tradition in drawing a distinction and establishing a hierarchy between humanity and the rest of God's creation, he recognizes that unless the oneness of the world of humanity and that of nature is embraced, the encounter of I--You cannot be realized, nor can genuine dialogue be experienced.

"How beautiful and legitimate the full I of Goethe sounds! It is the I of pure intercourse with nature." [21] As he praises the pantheistic Goethe, Buber stands with the thirteenth-century St. Francis of Assisi, known as the patron saint of ecology, who conversed intimately with birds and plants and rocks.

When we think of the impasse of contemporary civilization, it is impossible to overemphasize the need to embrace this vision of dialogue between humanity and nature, just as Buber recognized. For myself, when I take photographs of nature I feel that I am engaged in such a dialogue. The crisis of the natural environment is far more critical now than it was in Buber's time; the demand for this kind of dialogue has increased proportionately. In working for a culture of peace, too, we must have a similar attentiveness to nature.

Indeed, no effort to make the new century an era of universal respect for human rights will be truly fruitful unless we can expand our understanding of human rights beyond the anthropocentric tradition of modern humanism. To give human rights full meaning, we need to consider humanity as part of nature, as integral to the environment.

## Nature as a Bearer of Rights

From the middle years of the twentieth century, an accelerating chorus of voices has been raised, as is carefully documented in Roderick Nash's *The Rights of Nature*, declaring that rights are not intrinsic just to human beings but that our understanding of rights should be

expanded to include animals, plants and even inert nature. Our times demand such thinking, and it is for this reason that I have for some time urged that a global commitment to harmonious coexistence with nature be reflected in the Japanese Constitution.

To recognize nature not as an object of exploitation but as a bearer of rights represents a fundamental change in human civilization. Despite the overarching importance of this transition--or, perhaps, just because its dimensions can seem so overwhelming--efforts to move toward sustainability have progressed at a frustratingly slow pace.

This is prominently evidenced by our response to climate change. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was adopted just prior to the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. After a long and tortuous process, the ratification by Russia in 2004 of the Kyoto Protocol will finally cause it to enter into force this February.

The Kyoto Protocol stipulates at least a five-percent reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases by the industrialized countries party to the treaty relative to their 1990 levels. There are, however, many crucial issues that still need to be addressed, including the United States' withdrawal, the participation of developing countries and the development of a truly effective successor framework for the period after 2013.

Climate change is a key agenda item for this year's G8 Summit of leading industrial countries to be held at Gleneagles in the United Kingdom, to which both India and China have been invited. The participation of these two countries would certainly be desirable, as would substantive efforts to encourage the U.S. to modify its position while developing a successor framework to the Kyoto Protocol.

In parallel with negotiations for the implementation of the convention, efforts have been made in various countries to establish the legal framework for a transition to a sustainable society. The European Union, for example, has led the way since the 1990s by such measures as introducing an environmental tax to control emissions of greenhouse gases and efforts to increase the share of renewable energy sources as a replacement for fossil fuels.

In this way, the short- and medium-term questions of the global environmental crisis have become part of international political and economic discourse. But in a more essential sense this crisis needs to be addressed from a long-term perspective as something that threatens to undermine the very foundations of human survival.

It is said that in order to halt global warming it will be necessary to reduce total emissions by half. We need to rethink our ways of life as individuals and the core values and structures of contemporary civilization. The nature of the long and difficult path to sustainability reinforces once again the importance of taking action now with a long-term perspective.

The truly difficult and frightening aspect of the environmental crisis is that, even if we are able to note and respond to specific, individual danger signals, we cannot predict the most distant effects within the context of a vast system of interconnections.

In November of last year, a documentary on the environmental crisis, *Strange Days on*

*Planet Earth*, was broadcast in Japan. It traced the connections between what at first seem to be unrelated phenomena--respiratory illness in the Caribbean and African dust storms; landslides in Hawai'i and changes in the flora of South America--demonstrating that they are all interlinked parts of a global ecological crisis.

Such improbable connections and unanticipated consequences have been referred to as the Butterfly Effect--the chains of connection and causality whereby the fluttering of a butterfly's wings in Brazil could be the cause of a tornado in Texas. It is one of the subjects touched on in my dialogue with Professor Victor Antonovich Sadovnichy, rector of Moscow State University, in the context of resource and environmental issues. [\[22\]](#)

If we look back over the past several years, they were marked by a series of extreme weather conditions, from the deadly heat wave that struck Europe to massive floods in India and Bangladesh, as well as the hurricanes that devastated parts of North and Central America. Many experts consider these phenomena to be related to global climate change.

## A Failure to Listen

Chingiz Aitmatov, in his book, *The Mark of Cassandra*, uses the following parable to describe the psychological state that prevails among so many people. "Suppose," he writes, "that a severe structural defect has been discovered in one of the massive bridges spanning San Francisco Bay, but it can still be traveled. It is as if we are saying that so long as the bridge holds up and is passable, let's keep transporting freight over it, leaving the problem of the bridge itself for someone else to deal with in the future" (trans.). [\[23\]](#)

In this work, which bears the name of the Greek prophetess of doom, Aitmatov portrays the dark side of contemporary civilization. As is symbolized by the fact that the Framework Convention on Climate Change required thirteen years to become operative through the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, international efforts are lagging behind the rapid pace of ecological degradation; at this rate the gap will only grow greater. We need to pay earnest heed to Cassandra's prophecy (the various signals indicating changes in the global environment) and take action--at the international, national and local levels--to redirect the path of human civilization before these predictions of disaster become a reality.

Another book with a similar title and theme is Alan AtKisson's *Believing Cassandra: An Optimist Looks at a Pessimist's World*. As its subtitle indicates, the book is permeated with a hopeful tone. Even as he examines various global environmental issues, he avoids apocalyptic pessimism and the dogmatism of what Alvin Toffler has criticized as "eco-theocracy." [\[24\]](#) He engages in the search for a resolution to Cassandra's dilemma.

The book deals with the environmental crisis from the perspective of systems analysis, as the disconnect between two different systems--the world of human affairs and nature. In this sense, it is a problem of miscommunication, of the human failure to correctly receive and interpret the warning signals being issued by nature. The world of humans is capable of conscious action, and it is this capacity that places responsibility on the human side.

These may be rather commonsense observations, but I was struck by AtKisson's use of systems dynamics terminology to stress the crucial importance of feedback loops and their

failure to function as the heart of the problem. The flexible, dynamic response that AtKisson proposes is just what one would expect from a committed optimist.

Such terms as communication and feedback loops are indeed suggestive of the idea of dialogue with nature. But since, as Buber observed, nature "sticks to the threshold of language," [25] dialogue or encounter between humanity and nature can only be realized through a deliberate and sustained effort on the part of humankind, thus consciously establishing a relationship of I--You.

It might strike some as rather odd to bring language such as "I--You," with spiritual, if not religious, overtones to a discussion of how most effectively to safeguard the natural environment. But as the phrase "think globally, act locally" suggests, this is an issue that on the one hand is extremely concrete and on the other must be viewed from the span of the entire history of human civilization.

In this sense, continuous and sustained thought and effort are crucial; they in turn must be rooted in and reinforced by spirituality. Here, the philosophy of Buddhism can provide a robust basis. It identifies life as universally present in both sentient beings such as humans and animals, and insentient beings such as plants, mountains and rivers, the earth itself. It teaches that even insentient beings such as grasses and trees have the potential for enlightenment. [26]

If we lack the humility to heed attentively the messages of the natural world, arrogantly and recklessly asserting only the concerns and needs of the human world, feedback loops will fail to function and the natural systems that sustain us will collapse. This is the ultimate consequence of an I--It relationship with the natural world. The clear vision of Martin Buber, the philosopher of dialogue, was able to penetrate the multilayered pretensions of modern civilization.

## Sustaining the Effort

In this context, I cannot help but be impressed by the foresight of the founding president of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871--1944). In *Jinsei chirigaku* (The Geography of Human Life), written when he was just thirty-two years old, Makiguchi noted the following eight modes of spiritual interaction between humans and their surroundings: cognitive, utilitarian, scientific, aesthetic, moral, sympathetic, public and religious. Of these, the first five tend to regard the environment purely as an object that is different from oneself, as merely the material of experience for expanding knowledge of the world. In the last three forms of interaction, we understand our surroundings to be, like us, equally a part of the world. Makiguchi viewed these more intimate forms of interaction with our environment as effective in helping develop our emotional life and character:

[The quality of] interactions between humans and the world around us can first be understood to depend on the subjective qualities of the person. It is through our various interactions with the world that we develop in a fully balanced manner. That being the case, the world around us, nature in particular, can truly be our enlightener, our guide, our consoler. Forging a variety of interactions with nature is essential in enabling us to meet and deal with the limitless vicissitudes of life. Our happiness in life can indeed be said to be proportional to the extent and intimacy of our interaction with nature. [\[27\]](#)

While there may be minor differences, there is a basic concordance between the types of interaction Makiguchi refers to as experience and Buber's I--It relationship; and between the latter three forms of interaction and Buber's I--You relationship.

When Makiguchi describes the natural world as "our enlightener, our guide, our consoler," he is engaging in the most bold kind of personification, a confident expression of an I--You relationship with nature.

Rooted in the Hebraic tradition, Buber carefully chooses his words as he calls out to nature. In contrast, Makiguchi, living in the more animist spiritual milieu of Japan, plunges straight into a bold and direct friendship with nature. Without the compunctions or hesitations found in Buber, Makiguchi looks directly to nature as a partner.

Whether the approach is bold or cautious, in both we find genuine encounter and dialogue with nature, a call and response that involves the entire personality. It is for this reason that Makiguchi declares: "Forging a variety of interactions with nature is essential in enabling us to meet and deal with the limitless vicissitudes of life."

To harm one's precious partner in life is to harm oneself. The current state of the global environment goes far beyond anything that Makiguchi would have imagined possible in his time.

Humans can exist only in harmony with our environment.

## The Pitfalls of Globalization

The ongoing rush to globalization illustrates the kind of illusion to which contemporary civilization is prey. Despite its apparent promise, globalization in fact shows few signs of giving rise to a new global ethos. It is merely a form of economic expansionism, and its primary characteristic is the crude worship of monetary wealth, what could be termed global Mammonism. This is the bitter final outcome of the I--It objectification of the world.

Currency is of course the product of human wisdom that is essential in facilitating the smooth functioning of our life as social beings. At the same time, we need to remember that currency exists only as a set of agreements within the system of the world of human affairs. Within the system of the natural world, money is but scraps of paper. This is, of course, a deliberate overstatement; but I think it is crucial that we not lose complete sight of the artificial nature of currency.

If we are confused on this point and succumb to the allures of Mammon, we will disrupt the

essential congruence between human and natural systems that is necessary if we are to survive. The untrammelled logic of capital will generate ever-greater dissonances and collisions between these two systems. Eventually, we will find ourselves at the receiving end of nature's harsh payback.

It is for just this reason that I must emphasize the need for firm determination and action and the kind of persistence and continuity of effort that I mentioned earlier. Sustainability cannot be realized without sustained effort.

It was with this in mind that I stressed the need to learn, reflect and empower in the proposal I made to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in 2002. For I believe that these three steps are critical to the larger effort to promote and realize the goals of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

Concretely, the SGI has held the exhibition "Seeds of Change: The Earth Charter and Human Potential" (developed jointly by the SGI and the Earth Charter Initiative) in more than ten countries; we are further planning a new exhibition on global ethics and the Earth Charter to be held in Japan from this year.

## Reforming and Strengthening the United Nations

Looking ahead, I would like to propose a number of ways to advance the tide of humanism from the perspective of international systems and institutions. This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, and sixty years also since the end of World War II and the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Here I would like to focus on the following three topics: (1) reforming and strengthening the UN; (2) confidence and peacebuilding efforts in the Asia-Pacific region; and (3) initiatives toward nuclear disarmament and conflict prevention.

Last year, two bodies appointed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan submitted their recommendations for reforming the UN. These were the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, chaired by former prime minister Anand Panyarachun of Thailand, and the Panel of Eminent Persons on Civil Society and UN Relationships, chaired by former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil.

The High-level Panel's report, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, makes concrete recommendations that include enlargement of the Security Council and establishing a new Peacebuilding Commission. It also calls for measures to enhance the legal and institutional environment within which the UN responds to new threats. These proposed measures include: the rapid completion of negotiations on a comprehensive convention on terrorism; greater and more effective utilization of the International Criminal Court (ICC); and clearer criteria for the use of force. Of these, the need for a body to assist in post-conflict peacebuilding is something I emphasized in last year's proposal, and I hope the panel's recommendation will be realized.

The proposed overhaul of the Security Council that forms the main focus of the report would see the Council enlarged to better reflect such factors as regional representation and level of contribution to the UN. It is praiseworthy in its attempt to facilitate a wider sharing of responsibility and development of the Council into a deliberative body with a more global viewpoint.

Secretary-General Annan has stated that the UN's aim should be "to create a world that both has fewer threats and greater ability to meet those threats which nevertheless arise." [28] In addition to enhanced problem-solving capabilities, this will require a renewed emphasis on preventive measures.

When viewed in the context of these comments by the Secretary-General, the report's recommendations for enlarging the Security Council and establishing a new peacebuilding commission are perhaps more weighted toward problem-solving.

I would like to emphasize a preventive engagement with global problems--the goal of creating a world with fewer threats cited by the Secretary-General--in my ideas on how the UN might be reformed to meet the needs of the twenty-first century. My reason is that I believe that the soft power of dialogue and cooperation lies at the heart of the UN, and soft power functions most effectively at the preventive end of the spectrum, namely, defining paradigms for addressing global problems, creating collaborative frameworks aimed at prevention and so forth.

I would first like to propose a greater role for the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In addition to supporting development cooperation via debate and policy advisories on international economic and social issues, in recent years ECOSOC has played a key role in setting the agenda for priority UN action, channeling energies into issues such as the fight against poverty and managing the effects of globalization.

Drawing upon the experience of ECOSOC to date, I would hope that any UN restructuring and reform will place central emphasis on enhancing the following four soft power roles: (1) identifying and prioritizing the issues the international community must address; (2) setting standards and targets for international cooperation; (3) coordinating and enhancing the effectiveness of the UN's various activities; and (4) collecting and sharing information and best practices among UN agencies.

Part of my reason for stressing these roles is that in many instances the UN has moved to address such global problems as poverty and the environment only after they have reached crisis proportions. To move away from this *ex post facto* approach and reinvent itself as a prevention-focused body creating a world with fewer threats, the UN will need to strengthen its soft power capacities.

As part of restructuring in 1997, the various UN agencies were grouped by mission: peace and security, economic and social affairs, humanitarian affairs, and development, with executive committees for each. Above these is the Senior Management Group, which includes the conveners of each executive committee and meets regularly as the Secretary-General's cabinet.

To build on such efforts and enable the UN to fulfill the four soft power roles I identified above, there is a need for what might be termed a "global governance coordinating panel," whose work would be closely linked to ECOSOC deliberations and decision-making. A working group of NGOs with relevant expertise could support the activities of this panel; input from and collaboration with these NGOs would help generate a common awareness of problems and raise the public profile of the relevant issues. By further enhancing

system-wide information sharing and activity coordination, the panel would reflect the interrelated and complex nature of global problems.

The priority objective of such structural reforms should be achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), tackling those issues that endanger their realization by the target date of 2015. Research by the World Bank shows that the proportion of people living in extreme poverty (less than US\$1 a day) fell by almost half between 1981 and 2001, from forty percent to twenty-one percent of the world's population, an absolute decline of as many as 400 million despite rapid population growth. As this statistic shows, realizing the MDGs may be difficult, but it is by no means impossible. What is required quite simply is a strong determination on the part of the international community.

A high-level plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) [\[29\]](#) to comprehensively review the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and progress toward achieving the MDGs is scheduled for September. I appeal to the world's heads of state and government who gather at that time to reaffirm their commitment to the goal of ridding our world of unnecessary suffering.

## The Role of Civil Society

In conjunction with restructuring designed to bring forth the UN's soft power capacities, I should like to propose reforms aimed at strengthening the partnership between the UN and civil society.

In this connection, many thought-provoking concepts are set out in the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons chaired by former Brazilian president Cardoso, *We the Peoples: Civil Society, the United Nations and Global Governance*. The report calls upon the UN to mobilize and coordinate external cooperation rather than tackling problems alone; to this end, the UN must become an "outward-looking Organization" [\[30\]](#) that is capable of bringing together the many actors relevant to different issues.

A prerequisite for any such effort must surely be to build closer partnerships between the UN and civil society, in particular with NGOs.

Comparing the world in 1945 when the UN was founded to the world today, we note a great increase in the number of problems of global scale, as well as a plethora of NGOs mobilized to tackle them. We cannot ignore these momentous changes; confining discussion solely to internal reform of the UN would severely limit the benefit of any restructuring.

This being the case, efforts should be made to ensure that the voices of the world's people are more clearly heard at the UN. For example, the other major organs of the UN could adopt the system of accrediting NGOs with consultative status that is presently used by ECOSOC.

NGOs have for many years been able to observe UNGA sessions and access relevant documents, but have not been able to make statements there. At the series of Special Sessions of the UNGA convened during the 1990s, NGO representatives were able to address the assembly and take part in intergovernmental discussions at the ministerial level.

At the Security Council, too, since 1992 a practice known as the Arria Formula [\[31\]](#) has been in place whereby a member of the Council may invite, among others, representatives of NGOs to address an informal gathering of members of the Council on issues of shared concern.

On the basis of these experiences, moves should be made to guarantee that the right to participate in debates as nonvoting observers and to propose agenda items that NGOs currently have relative to ECOSOC be extended to their relations with the UNGA and the Security Council.

In 1963, U.S. President John F. Kennedy addressed the UNGA as follows: "My fellow inhabitants of this planet: Let us take a stand here in this Assembly of nations. And let us see if we, in our own time, can move the world to a just and lasting peace." [\[32\]](#)

On the occasion of the UN's sixtieth anniversary, let us recall Kennedy's words as we reaffirm our commitment to uphold the underlying spirit of the UN Charter, which opens with the stirring phrase "We the Peoples..." For the good of our planet, for the good of humankind, let us make the most of this opportunity, bringing all our intelligence and conviction to bear on the challenges of reforming and strengthening the United Nations.

## For an Asia-Pacific UN Office

Secondly, I would like to offer some ideas for building the foundations of trust and peace in the Asia-Pacific region. To begin, I would like to propose the establishment of a UN Asia-Pacific office as a new regional base. The establishment of an office for the Asia-Pacific region would mark the start of a new effort to advance human security in the region, and to make it a model for the UN's goal of building a world with fewer threats.

At present, in addition to UN Headquarters in New York, there are the UN Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. These three cities are home to a variety of UN offices and agencies, each with a focus on a different cluster of concerns--human rights and disarmament in Geneva, crime prevention and international trade in Vienna, and environment and human habitat in Nairobi.

In a previous proposal (1994), I spoke of the desirability of the UN having a regional base in Asia. I would like on this occasion to extend that idea to embrace the Pacific region as well, which includes such key supporters of UN activities as Canada and Australia. As many UN activities are focused on the particular needs of countries in Asia, these linkages could generate valuable synergies.

Moreover, Japan, which is both an Asian and a Pacific country, is home to the United Nations University (UNU), whose research and capacity-building activities in recent years have been focused on two areas: (1) peace and governance; and (2) environment and sustainable development.

A UN Asia-Pacific office could form a hub with organic links to UNU and other institutions in the region. Its energies could be focused on the realization of human security and UN-centered efforts toward building the structures of global governance that will enable people to live secure and fulfilling lives. ECOSOC, which presently convenes its four-week

substantive sessions alternately in New York and Geneva, could consider including this Asia-Pacific office in the rotation.

One possible location for such an office would be Bangkok, currently home to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). Another might be Okinawa in Japan or Cheju Island in South Korea. Having endured the indescribable misery of armed conflict, both could be considered "peace islands" whose people harbor strong aspirations for a world without war.

The Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research has been studying the issues of human security and global governance for many years as one of its major projects. To mark its tenth anniversary, in February 2006 the institute plans to host an international conference on strengthening the UN and global governance. The Toda Institute will be carrying out an accelerated program of joint research with other institutions, including explorations of the feasibility of a UN Asia-Pacific office.

## Toward East Asian Integration

The next area I would like to address is laying the foundations in East Asia for the kind of regional integration we see in the European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Since the currency and economic crisis that struck East Asia in 1997, there have been growing calls for greater regional cooperation centered on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). A framework for intra-regional dialogue, consisting of the ten ASEAN countries plus China, Japan and South Korea (ASEAN+3), is now well established. Against this backdrop, in November 2004 a summit of ASEAN leaders decided to hold the first East Asia Summit in Malaysia this autumn. Discussions here are also expected to include moves toward greater integration with an eye to the eventual establishment of an "East Asian community."

As someone who has called at every available opportunity for greater integration in Asia, I welcome these moves and hope that summits and other gatherings will clarify the aim of building a regional community that is open to the rest of the world and contributes to peace, stability and prosperity.

Issues such as ecological integrity, human development and disaster strategies are amenable to intra-regional cooperation. Successful collaboration would foster trust and open the way to the formation of a regional community.

In the area of the environment, frameworks such as the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET) and the Asia Forest Partnership (AFP) already operate. Further cooperative structures should be developed to respond to the full range of environmental challenges.

In human development, public health and hygiene is a particular focus. The decade to 2015 has been designated the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life," [\[33\]](#) and I hope efforts will be made through such initiatives as the Water Environment Partnership in Asia (WEPA) to safeguard and manage water resources. With the number of reported HIV infections in East Asia rising rapidly, channeling resources into combating the virus will

also be critical.

Strategies for mitigating natural disasters can be an important focus for regional cooperation. The huge earthquake that devastated the historic city of Bam in southeast Iran in December 2003, the powerful earthquake that hit Niigata Prefecture in Japan last October, and the deaths of over 200,000 people in the earthquake and subsequent tsunami in the Indian Ocean in December of last year--all have highlighted the acute need for an international recovery system.

This month, a decade after an earthquake killed more than six thousand people in Kobe, Japan, the World Conference on Disaster Reduction was convened in that city. Delegates to the conference adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action for the next ten years, which sets out a list of five key objectives including to "ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis." [34] Another outcome of the conference was an agreement to set up an international recovery platform to support the mid- to long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts of societies hit by natural disasters.

Tragically, it is impossible to entirely eliminate natural disasters. It is therefore crucial, as the Kobe conference stressed, to promote disaster reduction efforts that minimize the damage caused by disasters by putting in place early warning systems and strengthening response capacities. I hope the new international recovery platform will become functional as soon as possible and would like to see substantive progress on a full range of systems for cooperation on disaster prevention and recovery support in Asia. A priority must be to set up the kind of early warning system whose need was made painfully clear by the Indian Ocean tsunami.

As mentioned, the EU provides one model for the type of regional integration that I believe could greatly benefit East Asia. Last year saw an effective relaunch of the EU following enlargement to twenty-five member states. This coincided with the signing of the EU Constitution. Together these mark a major step toward the creation of a political community transcending traditional conceptualizations of national sovereignty.

Joseph Nye, former dean of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, offers the following analysis: "Eight of the new members are former Communist countries that were locked behind the Iron Curtain for nearly half a century. Their attraction to the Union is a sign of the appeal--the 'soft power'--of the idea of European unification." [35]

Soft power is the diametrical opposite of the use and threat of military might to dominate and coerce, which has played a predominant role in shaping human history to date. Taking the form of dialogue and regional cooperation, grounded in a gradualist yet tenacious process of consensus-building, soft power has been the key to EU integration.

In Europe, it was France and Germany who worked to overcome a history of conflict in two world wars to build the relationship of trust and cooperation that became the driving force behind integration. In the same way, closer ties of friendship between China, Japan and South Korea can be pivotal to opening the way to the kind of united, integrated community that will make war in East Asia unthinkable.

**Youth Exchange: Basis for Lasting Peace**

At talks between the leaders of these three countries last November, agreement was reached on an Action Strategy on Trilateral Cooperation designed not only to strengthen cooperation in areas such as environmental protection, disaster prevention and management, but also to promote cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

In terms of concrete initiatives, the EU Erasmus program provides a model for student mobility that could profitably be emulated by China, Japan and South Korea. Erasmus consists of a series of interuniversity programs that seek to realize a target of ten percent of all students in participating countries having the experience of studying at an institution of higher education in another country.

The experience of the EU points toward a number of issues that would have to be overcome in order to successfully build a corresponding infrastructure for student exchanges in East Asia. These include: assuring adequate funding for exchange students, easing worries about studying in another country, and resolving uncertainties about recognition of credits and qualifications.

I personally have long been an enthusiastic proponent of educational ties. Young people carry the hopes for our shared future, and I believe firmly that the connections forged by people of different countries in their youth can form the basis for lasting peace.

Under the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) program, exchanges of students and teaching staff from institutions of higher education have been taking place since 1993. I believe these should be extended significantly--to eventually form a youth educational exchange program embracing all the countries of Asia. Such a program would do much to lay the foundations for long-term peaceful coexistence in the region.

There is already a considerable basis on which to build an interuniversity network linking China, Japan and Korea that could act as a precursor to a more comprehensive structure. China at present ranks second behind the U.S. in the number of exchange agreements with Japanese universities, while Korea ranks third. And Chinese exchange students at universities and technical schools in Japan are more numerous than any other nationality. Here again Korean exchange students are the next largest in number.

I was very proud when Soka University in 1975 became the first university in Japan to accept exchange students from China following the normalization of diplomatic relations. Soka University currently has exchange agreements with ninety universities in forty-one countries and territories worldwide. These include twenty-two universities in China and five in Korea. There are also plans for Soka University to open a Beijing office by the end of 2005, in anticipation of a further expansion of educational exchanges.

For its part, the Soka Gakkai in Japan has been working to form closer ties between its youth membership and the All-China Youth Federation (ACYF), to which over 300 million of China's young people belong. Since a delegation led by China's current president, Hu Jintao (then chair of the ACYF), came to Japan and signed an exchange protocol twenty years ago, exchange delegations have visited both countries on a regular basis. A new ten-year exchange agreement was formally signed in 2004. [\[36\]](#)

In addition, this year is also Japan--Korea Friendship Year, commemorating forty years since the normalization of relations between Japan and South Korea. This offers an

excellent opportunity to further develop friendly relations that in recent years have seen lively growth in cultural interaction and the movement of people.

My hope is that 2005 will mark a new start for relations between China, Japan and South Korea. Sixty years after the end of World War II, we should work to support and encourage forward-looking exchanges among the young people of our respective countries based on a willingness to confront and learn from the lessons of the past.

## Supporting the Six-Party Talks

As well as building trusting relationships with one another through these forward-looking programs and other initiatives, I believe that these three countries should work closely together in a concerted quest for a breakthrough in the standoff over the North Korean nuclear arms development issue.

Southeast Asia already has a Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Bangkok Treaty), which entered into force in 1997. A similar zone should be created in Northeast Asia; the prerequisite for this must be the success of the six-party talks involving the United States, Russia, Japan, China, North Korea and South Korea and the resolution of the issue of North Korean nuclear arms. The six-party talks were first held in August 2003, and the second and third rounds in 2004. The talks have so far failed to generate substantive results, however, and the absence of any timetable for further rounds is causing growing concern in the international community.

As a way out of the deadlock, I would like to suggest that the working group set up to discuss specific procedures for the dismantlement of the North Korean nuclear program be converted into a standing body. This could be based in Beijing, the venue of the past rounds of talks, or New York, the home of UN Headquarters. The working group was established at the second round of the six-party talks held in February 2004, and its role defined at the third round in June. But it has yet to be convened.

To facilitate the functioning of this working group, it would be helpful to establish a venue for informal discussions, to which countries that have voluntarily relinquished their nuclear weapons plans could be invited and where there could be a broad-based exchange of opinions on regional security guarantees.

In any event, we must revive the six-party talks and continue to make efforts to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. The six-party talks should be developed into a constructive forum of dialogue for building peace in Northeast Asia.

## Generating Momentum for Nuclear Disarmament

The third area I would like to discuss concerns steps that must be taken for nuclear disarmament and conflict prevention.

In this regard, I would like to stress the need for prompt moves on the part of the nuclear powers to reduce and dismantle their existing arsenals and strengthen the nuclear nonproliferation regime.

This year is the sixtieth anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki,

the only times nuclear weapons have been used in war. It is also the fiftieth anniversary of the Russell--Einstein Manifesto, an international appeal for nuclear abolition.

Only one of the eleven signatories to this manifesto is still alive--Nobel Peace Laureate and emeritus president of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, Sir Joseph Rotblat. Preparations are currently underway for the publication of a serialized dialogue between myself and Sir Joseph. In our conversations, he expressed deep concern over the lack of any substantial progress in nuclear disarmament. He also deplored new nuclear development programs initiated by the nuclear powers despite the "unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament" made in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). [\[37\]](#)

Addressing the 54th Pugwash Conference in October 2004, Sir Joseph warned that "the proliferation of nuclear weapons cannot be stopped while the Nuclear Weapons States arrogate to themselves the possession of nuclear weapons and refuse to enter into comprehensive negotiations towards elimination...." [\[38\]](#)

I fully concur. Even if the undertaking in the Final Document is not legally binding, it reflects the consensus of the states party to the NPT, and acts that disregard it risk undermining the very foundation of the NPT framework and accelerating trends toward nuclear proliferation.

The 2005 NPT Review Conference is scheduled for May this year. I strongly urge the five declared nuclear-weapon states, who are also the permanent members of the UN Security Council, to promptly begin building the framework for disarmament, reminding themselves of the course of events that led to the indefinite extension of the NPT ten years ago.

Over recent years, nonproliferation issues have been continuously taken up as a critical challenge at summit meetings. The G8 Action Plan on Nonproliferation, aimed at preventing illicit diversion of nuclear materials and technology, was adopted at the Sea Island Summit in 2004.

Effective measures to reduce arms made in good faith by the nuclear powers are essential in order for efforts such as the G8 Action Plan and the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative to be seen by the international community as convincing and credible, and to inspire the broad-based cooperation needed if they are to succeed.

For many years, negotiations on reduction of nuclear stockpiles took the form of bilateral talks between the U.S. and the Soviet Union or Russia. With the recent stagnation of this process, however, I think we need to step away from this approach and begin a new multilateral disarmament process.

The fact that for a long while we have had no prospect of reducing or eliminating nuclear arsenals heightens the danger of proliferation--not only of nuclear arms but of other weapons of mass destruction--with a resultant increase in military tensions. Nuclear nonproliferation and nuclear disarmament are inseparable; when they are advanced in tandem, our world will make important strides toward peace and stability.

Just as nuclear nonproliferation efforts are monitored by the International Atomic Energy

Agency (IAEA), I believe we need an international nuclear disarmament agency, a specialized agency to oversee fulfillment of the "unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to achieve the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals" referred to above.

Progress on negotiating the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) at the Conference on Disarmament has been at a standstill for many years now. We need to revive this process, urging India and Pakistan--who came to possess nuclear weapons outside the NPT--as well as Israel to join, thus engaging them in international regimes for the control of weapons-grade nuclear materials.

## Curbing the Arms Trade

I would also like to call for the earliest possible conclusion of multilateral legal controls on the arms trade. In my 1999 proposal, I stressed the urgency of restricting the trade in arms to prevent the flow of weapons into regions with ongoing conflict or heightened confrontation and tension, as one element in the process to deinstitutionalize war.

There is a rising global chorus of voices calling for such curbs. The Control Arms campaign was launched in October 2003 to advocate legally binding controls on the arms trade at all levels. Three NGOs--Amnesty International, Oxfam and the International Action Network on Small Arms--are working together to promote this campaign, appealing to governments to conclude a treaty that would limit transfers of small arms by next year.

Today, there are over 600 million small arms in the world, and more than 500,000 people are killed with conventional weapons every year. The UN held the first Conference on the Illicit Traffic in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in 2001, and adopted a program of action to "prevent, combat and eradicate" this trade.

In addition to such measures against the illegal arms trade, a regulatory structure must be put in place as soon as possible to cover authorized arms exports in light of their scale--a staggering annual value totaling US\$21 billion--and impact.

Exporting weapons into regions of heightened tension, whether legally or illegally, flouts any move toward conflict prevention. By feeding local and regional arms races, it also has a seriously negative impact on human security, diverting budget resources to military expenditures and away from basic services such as education, health care and sanitation desperately needed by impoverished people.

According to the Control Arms campaign, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council account for eighty-eight percent of the world's exports of conventional weapons. In the last four years, the U.S., the U.K. and France earned more income from arms exports to Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America than they provided in aid.

It is imperative that humanity deinstitutionalize war in the twenty-first century. The first step toward this must be to learn to resist the temptation to exploit war and civil strife in other countries for the sake of one's own influence and profit.

I earlier touched on the participation of China and India in the deliberations on climate change to be held during the G8 Summit in Gleneagles this year. In the same spirit, I would like to propose that a guideline for strengthening controls on small arms be discussed in the context of a G10 framework.

Last year I was fortunate to meet with former president Kocheril Raman Narayanan of India. One of the topics we discussed was the increasing importance of China and India in the world. Today, it would be virtually impossible to consider solutions for global challenges without their involvement.

I emphasized the significance of both countries for the twenty-first century in my proposal four years ago. It is my conviction that the spiritual heritage in which both Chinese and Indian civilizations are rooted, when brought to full blossom as soft power in the contemporary world, can make great contributions to creating peace in Asia and the world.

My proposal in 1998 that the G8 Summit meetings should evolve into a "summit of responsible states" through the added participation of China and India was also based on this idea.

Although full development into a G10 Summit may take some time, I would urge that the small arms issue be discussed during the Gleneagles Summit this year and that negotiations on a treaty involving the major powers be initiated promptly as we work toward the second Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects scheduled for next year.

## Educating for Disarmament

Next, I would like to stress the importance of disarmament and nonproliferation education. In recent years, there has been a growing appreciation of the need for grassroots efforts to raise awareness of these issues, particularly among the younger generations. This is essential if we are to counter the accelerating trend toward nuclear proliferation and to breathe new life into the currently stagnant nuclear disarmament process.

In 2001, UN Secretary-General Annan appointed a working group of governmental experts from ten countries. The product of their deliberations, the *United Nations Study on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education*, was submitted and adopted at the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly in 2002.

The importance of disarmament education gained prominence at the First Special Session on Disarmament of the UNGA in 1978. In a ten-point proposal written on the occasion of that session, I called for the promotion of disarmament education at the grassroots level, highlighting the significance of activities to inform the general public in a concrete and compelling manner of the atrocity of war and the horrors of nuclear weapons.

In 1982, the UN launched a ten-year World Disarmament Campaign. Leading up to it, the SGI held the exhibition "Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World" in June of the same year at UN Headquarters in New York in collaboration with the UN Department of Public Information and the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The exhibition toured the world, visiting nuclear powers and countries of different social systems and ideologies, and was seen by an estimated 1.2 million people.

After the Cold War ended, we continued to organize exhibitions such as "War and Peace: From a Century of War to a Century of Hope" and an updated antinuclear exhibition, "Nuclear Arms: Threat to Humanity," bringing people together in their shared yearning for peace and generating momentum toward a world without war.

In 1998, the exhibition "Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century" was launched. It introduces the life and ideas of Dr. Pauling and pays homage to his contribution to peace and humanitarian causes. It has been shown in the U.S., Japan and several European countries, and visited by more than a million people.

The Pauling exhibition has been very well received. Jayantha Dhanapala, then UN under-secretary-general for disarmament affairs, commented that the exhibit's concept of disarmament education concurs with that of the UN reflected in a resolution of the General Assembly in 2000. It was also mentioned in the UN Secretary-General's report on disarmament and nonproliferation education submitted to the General Assembly last year.

It is precisely because emerging threats such as terrorism have increased instability in the world that the international community must make a united effort to set our world securely on a path toward peace. Disarmament and nonproliferation education can play a vital role in this.

In his foreword to the report mentioned above, Secretary-General Annan noted, "It is striking for someone of my generation to think that an entire new generation of human beings is coming to maturity without an ever present terror of nuclear catastrophe." [39] He went on to warn against the dangers of allowing ignorance and complacency about disarmament issues to take root among the younger generation.

Indeed, should this happen, no amount of treaty language will be enough to solidify a genuine trend toward peace. In that sense, I think that we need to actively incorporate disarmament and nonproliferation into school education.

One of the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report calls for participatory lesson plans based on "case studies that encourage students to think critically and to undertake specific follow-up actions to bring about positive global change." [40] It also recommends adding peace studies programs to college and university curricula.

Complementing school education are efforts to raise awareness in every part of society. For our part, the SGI will persevere in activities to promote disarmament and nonproliferation education. In this, we draw courage from the declaration calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons issued by the Soka Gakkai's second president, Josei Toda (1900--58), which he declared was foremost among his instructions to his successors. [41]

The year 2005 is the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Soka Gakkai. From the beginning, the Soka Gakkai has been consistently dedicated to building a peaceful society through education, as symbolized by its inception as the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Society for Value-Creating Education) and the fact that its first and second presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, were educators.

This unchanged commitment propels our engagement in activities to support the two international frameworks launched this year, the World Programme for Human Rights Education and the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

## Humanity's Eternal Victory

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the fundamental spirit of the SGI as we celebrate our thirtieth anniversary.

Over these three decades, individual SGI members have made steady, tireless efforts, based on their Buddhist faith and as responsible citizens, to offer hope and build trust in their respective societies. These efforts have enabled the SGI's global network of humanism to expand from 51 countries and territories to 190.

The spirit underlying our actions is encapsulated in the purposes and principles of the SGI Charter adopted ten years ago, in particular the following undertakings:

SGI shall contribute to peace, culture and education for the happiness and welfare of all humanity based on Buddhist respect for the sanctity of life.

SGI shall contribute to the promotion of education, in pursuit of truth as well as the development of scholarship, to enable all people to cultivate their individual character and enjoy fulfilling and happy lives.

SGI shall respect cultural diversity and promote cultural exchange, thereby creating an international society of mutual understanding and harmony.

Rooted in this commitment to peace, culture and education, SGI members everywhere continue to engage in earnest dialogue--in our families, our communities, our societies. In this way we seek to generate a global tide of peace and creative coexistence.

We draw inspiration from the unshakeable faith Presidents Makiguchi and Toda placed in the power of education to unite humankind in its goodness--that this is the sure and certain path to humanity's eternal victory. Engraving in our hearts the profound spirit of our mentors, we reaffirm our determination to swell the currents of solidarity among awakened citizens, sharing and spreading a dynamic commitment to peace and humanism.

## Notes:

1. Tagore 1921, p. 33.
2. Buber 1947, p. 40.
3. Willens 1984, p. 27.
4. Qtd. in Takeyama 1953, p. 189.
5. Hermanns 1983, p. 53.
6. Clark 1984, p. 752.
7. Hermanns 1983, p. 143.
8. Kaneko 1991, p. 262.
9. Nichiren 1999, p. 402.
10. *Seikyo Shimbun* 1991, p. 3.
11. Jacquard 1997, p. 18.
12. Takakusu 1977, 14:544.
13. Ikeda 1993.
14. Hermanns 1983, p. 117.

15. Mandela 2004, p. 43.
16. UNDP 2004, p. 77.
17. Ibid., 75.
18. Buber 1996, p. 62.
19. Ibid., 56–57.
20. Aitmatov and Ikeda 1992, p. 5.
21. Buber 1996, p. 116.
22. Sadovnichy and Ikeda 2004, p. 236.
23. Aitmatov 1996, p. 239.
24. Toffler 1990, p. 369.
25. Buber 1996, p. 150.
26. Nichiren 1952, p. 1339.
27. Makiguchi 1983, 1:37. Cf.: Makiguchi 2002, p. 31.
28. *Kokusaimondai* 2004, p. 5.
29. UN 2004f.
30. UN 2004g.
31. Paul 2003.
32. Kennedy 1963.
33. UN 2004e.
34. UNISDR 2005.
35. Nye 2004.
36. *Soka Gakkai Newsletter* 2004.
37. UN 2000a.
38. Rotblat 2004.
39. UN 2004b.
40. Ibid.
41. Toda 1981, 4:565.

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