

Humanizing Religion, Creating Peace

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On the occasion of the thirty-third anniversary of the founding of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), I would like to share some thoughts and proposals in the effort to contribute to the realization of a lasting peace in the world.

Already some twenty years have passed since the end of the Cold War, which held international society in its grip for nearly half a century. Despite having entered the new century, the outlines of a new global framework have yet to emerge.

In October 1990, the dialogue I had conducted with two-time Nobel laureate Linus Pauling (1901-94) was published. At the start of the dialogue, Dr. Pauling set out this hopeful view:

I am so excited by the prospects for our world. I am filled with courage. The Soviet Union has started to move. Under the leadership of President Mikhail Gorbachev, the global tides have started to turn toward disarmament. ... For the first time, humanity is walking a path that accords with rationality and reason. We have finally started to move toward such a world. [\[1\]](#)

Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century

The exhibition "Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century," organized by the SGI, the Pauling family and Oregon State University, portrays the life, ideas and commitments of one of the modern world's most influential scientists and peace activists. Since its opening in San Francisco in 1998, the exhibition has been shown in 16 venues in 5 countries, and seen by more than 1 million visitors.

Linus Pauling won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1954 and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1962. Daisaku Ikeda and Pauling met on four occasions between 1987 and 1993; the record of their dialogues was published in English as *A Lifelong Quest for Peace* in 1992.

Dr. Pauling was almost 90 at the time, and these words bring to mind the warm and gentle visage of this great champion of peace. Regrettably, subsequent developments proved to be a bitter betrayal of Dr. Pauling's hopes. For a time in the early 1990s, the idea was trumpeted of a "new world order" led by the United States, the country at the forefront of an inevitable process of globalization. But new strains and conflicts quickly emerged, and this vision was forced into retreat. Our present situation could best be characterized as one of global disorder.

But we must not allow the wheels of history to slip backward. Whatever the difficulties, we must not abandon the search for a

new global order that will serve the interests and the welfare of all humankind. Only through such committed efforts can we prevent global society from being enveloped by an ever-deepening chaos.

Important initiatives are being taken in this direction. Recently (January 15-16), more than 75 UN member states and international organizations participated in the Alliance of Civilizations Forum in Madrid, Spain, with a shared belief that the maintenance of international peace and security requires the overcoming of cultural animosities. Addressing the gathering, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on the participants to further their endeavors for peace: "You may have different backgrounds and perspectives, but you share a common conviction that the Alliance of Civilizations is an important way to counter extremism and heal the divisions that threaten our world." [\[2\]](#)

Likewise, in a press conference held at the start of this year, French President Nicolas Sarkozy advocated a "policy of civilization" (*politique de civilisation*) with an emphasis on humanity and solidarity. Stating, "You cannot organize the world of the twenty-first century with the organization of the twentieth," [\[3\]](#) he proposed that the current G8 summit meeting be expanded to include China, India, South Africa, Mexico and Brazil, to create a new G13 system.

I have for some time urged that the current summit system be expanded to include China, India and other countries to form a "summit of responsible states," a step that will promote a wider sharing of global responsibility. As such, I can lend my wholehearted support to this proposal.

The slide toward fundamentalism

It was under the banner of freedom and democracy that moves to construct a "new world order" were promoted in the aftermath of the Cold War. While these values are, of course, essential, we must recognize the danger that inevitably accompanies any attempt to transplant specific institutions and practices to the soil of a different political culture. Even where they are established, any slackening of the effort to maintain and enhance freedom and democracy will allow them to regress, until we are left with forms devoid of real substance.

This was the thrust of the analysis I made in my 1990 peace proposal just months after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November of the previous year. I based this on my reading of Plato's *Republic*, in which he states that by supporting the insatiable pursuit of freedom, democracy nurtures a multitude of desires that gradually and insidiously "seize the citadels of the souls of youth." [4] Finally, the situation gets out of control and a strong leader is sought to restore order. From among the "idle drones," a single stinger-equipped creature is chosen. In this way, Plato stresses the logic and likelihood of a regression from democracy to tyranny.

The concerns I expressed at that time have not proven baseless. The unhinged march of finance-centered globalization has produced a world riven by disparities of an unprecedented scale, the unabashed worship of material wealth on the one hand and a corresponding sense of frustration at the absence of economic justice on the other. This structural inequity is a key factor--perhaps *the* key factor--underlying the forms of terrorism now proliferating throughout the world. History teaches that any attempt to suppress terrorism and similar crimes through the unilateral application of force without a careful analysis of and response to the structural factors involved will only make things worse. Order that relies on force is the near neighbor of chaos.

As a Buddhist, I direct my deepest concern toward the mentality that has arisen against this backdrop--what might be described as a slide toward fundamentalism. This is not limited to the religious fundamentalism that has been the subject of so much debate, but includes ethnocentrism, chauvinism, racism and a dogmatic adherence to various ideologies, including those of the market. Such fundamentalisms flourish in conditions of chaos and disorder. What is common to all of them is that abstract principles and ideas take precedence over living human beings who in turn are forced into a subservient role.

While I will not attempt a detailed analysis here, I believe that Albert Einstein (1879-1955) expressed the essence of the issue when he stated, "principles are made for men and not men for principles." [5]

To sustain and put into practice with any consistency the worldview evoked by Einstein is not an easy task. People are quick to turn to preestablished rules that provide a ready-made answer to their questions or doubts. To borrow Simone Weil's (1909-43) metaphor, people and society are ceaselessly dragged down by the forces of gravity (*la pesanteur*), a seemingly inherent force in human beings that leads us to debase ourselves. The essential nature of this force is that it causes us to lose sight of the sense of self that should form the core of our humanity.

The kind of humanism I am convinced our times require is one capable of confronting and halting the slide toward fundamentalism. This is the work of restoring people and humanity to the role of central protagonist, something which ultimately can only be undertaken through a ceaseless spiritual effort to train and to temper ourselves.

Gide's humanism

Here I would like to cite one well-known episode that I believe illustrates the confrontation between fundamentalism and humanism. It pertains to the evolving views of the great French humanist André Gide (1869-1951) regarding the socialist experiment of the Soviet Union.

In June 1936, hearing that admired fellow writer Maxim Gorky (1868-1936) was critically ill, Gide rushed to Moscow, arriving a day before Gorky's death. After speaking at the funeral and attending related commemorative events, Gide fulfilled a long-standing wish by traveling throughout the Soviet Union for a month. His memoirs of those travels were published in November of that year as *Retour de l'U.R.S.S.*, a book that sparked public debate of truly historic intensity and proportion, embroiling intellectual opinion not only in France, the rest of Europe and the U.S.A., but also in Japan.

While Gide fully acknowledges the historical significance of the Russian Revolution and subsequent developments in the Soviet Union, he also--with what today strikes us as an excess of caution--puts the analytical knife to the pathologies of Soviet communism that were then beginning to surface. That the bulk of his observations were apposite has since been verified in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse.

This was, however, the Red Thirties, when the struggle against fascism in the Spanish Civil War rallied intellectuals and young people to the Left; for many, the Soviet Union was the focus of their hopes. Gide's criticism, coming as it did from an acknowledged member of the Left, elicited a strong and widespread reaction in academic, journalistic and political spheres.

While opinion was divided, the far greater part was aligned against Gide. Considered a traitor by many, he found himself isolated and without support. Even then, however, Gide refused to retreat. He was determined above all to be true to his beliefs.

"In my eyes," he wrote, "there are things even more important than myself, even more important than the U.S.S.R.: that is humanity, its destiny and its culture." [6]

I consider this a clear, concise and indeed historic declaration of humanism. The word "humanity" is today bandied about in a hackneyed way, tired and lacking in resonance, but for Gide it contained layers of nuance with a polished and honed meaning: it signaled the irreplaceable foundation for justice, a universally valid basis for action.

"[T]here are things even more important than myself." Gide's words point to the culture of humanity--a culture embodying universal values, the spirit of respecting self and others, difference and diversity, freedom, justice, tolerance--for whose sake he was prepared to give all, including, it would seem, his very life. The depth and intensity of Gide's convictions no doubt supported him in his solitary resistance to the overwhelming tide of the times.

The breadth of Gide's humanism brings to mind the Buddhist teaching that the ultimate principle and essential nature of all phenomena is to be found nowhere other than in the human heart. This universal "Buddha nature"--sometimes symbolized by the image of the Buddha seated on a lotus flower dais--is the pure, undefiled and indestructible aspect of the human heart. The determination to respect all people that forms the bedrock of Buddhist humanism brings us to see that not only sectarian differences but also differences of ideology, culture and ethnicity are never absolute. These differences, like the order and organization of human society itself, are only relative; they should be treated as flexible, fluid concepts that need to be constantly renegotiated so as best to serve human needs. This is what it means for people--and not abstract principles--to be the protagonists of destiny.

Also in the Buddhist scriptures, we find this passage:

Hence the storehouse of the eighty-four thousand teachings represents a day-to-day record of one's own existence. This storehouse of the eighty thousand teachings is embodied in and contained within one's own mind. To use the mind to suppose that the Buddha or the Law or the pure land exist somewhere other than in one's own self and to seek them elsewhere is a delusion. When the mind encounters good or bad causes, it creates and puts forth the aspects of good and bad. [7]

While the "the eighty-four thousand teachings" is an expression used to refer to the entire corpus of Shakyamuni's teachings as a Buddha, it can also be interpreted to signify all that comprises this world of distinctions and differences. Recognizing that ultimately this exists within each human being, we must strive to reach the plane, free from discriminatory consciousness, where the equal worth of all human beings comes clearly into view. This must be our starting point and our final destination. This stance is in stark contrast to those ideologies commonly described as fundamentalist, which lead inevitably to an excessive emphasis on and attachment to difference.

An unanswered challenge

More than a half-century ago, the Japanese literary critic Kazuo Watanabe (1901-75), who devoted his life to the research and translation of French humanist philosophy, looked back on the storms of fanaticism that had characterized World War II. His response was to call for the "humanization of religion":

The second religious reformation must be undertaken by a new Luther, a new Calvin. Although this may seem an odd expression, the only path to this is the humanization of religion. By this I mean to discard all of the opium-like aspects of religion and to recognize that even God exists to serve humanity. We need to reflect on the human smallness and frailty that make it easy for us to become the instruments and slaves of that which we created. We need to teach this to others and to take on the task of clarifying our responsibility relative to all that human beings have gained since the Renaissance. [8]

The realities of the world of religion today, sixty years after Watanabe made this radical proposal, lead us inevitably to see it as an unanswered challenge. The simplest evidence for this is that the word "fundamentalism" appears nowhere so frequently as in connection with religion. We cannot allow this challenge to remain unanswered. For to do so would be to allow religion to be a factor in conflict and war, to undermine its potential as a motive force for the construction of peace.

Kazuo Watanabe

Kazuo Watanabe (1901–75) was a scholar of French literature, a literary critic and one of the important voices of Japanese humanism during and after World War II. Watanabe graduated from the University of Tokyo in 1925 and was professor of French literature there from 1948 to 1972. He is known for his translations of Rabelais and Erasmus, his knowledge of Renaissance thought and his explorations of the meaning of tolerance in contemporary society. Over the years, he taught and fostered the talents of many important scholars and writers, including the Nobel laureate Kenzaburo Oe.

In 1993, I had the opportunity to deliver an address at Harvard University, entitled "Mahayana Buddhism and Twenty-first Century Civilization." In it I urged that we give priority to the actual impact of religion on human beings: "Does religion make people stronger, or does it weaken them? Does it encourage what is good or what is evil in them? Are they made better and more wise--or less--by religion?" [\[9\]](#) These are the questions we need to ask of all religions, including of course Buddhism, if we are to succeed in fully "humanizing" them.

Nobel Peace laureate Elie Wiesel has examined the fanaticism and hatred that inevitably accompany dogmatism and fundamentalism. He established The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, which sponsored a number of international conferences on the theme of the "Anatomy of Hate." Wiesel describes his motivation as follows:

How is one to explain fanaticism's attraction for so many intellectuals, to this day? And what can be done to immunize religion against its pull? ... Since the beginnings of history, man alone suffers from fanaticism and hate, and he alone can stem it. In all of creation, only man is both capable and guilty of hate. [\[10\]](#)

This is the irrepressible cry of conscience, a fervent expression of the need for the humanization of religion.

As a child, Wiesel lost his family in the Holocaust--he was separated from his mother and sister at Auschwitz, and witnessed the death of his father at Buchenwald. Having survived the hell of Nazism, the most horrific form of fanaticism imaginable, his words carry a special weight and resonance; they convey a palpable sense of the impasse humanity confronts.

An attachment to sectarian concerns at the expense of efforts to humanize religion will indeed render people weaker, more evil and more foolish. Such fanaticism will increase the opium-like aspects of religion, making it an ever more culpable factor in conflict and war. There is probably no need to mention specific examples of the outcome of the kind of slide toward fundamentalism to which Wiesel alludes, as this dark and destructive aspect of religion has been engraved across the full span of human history.

Indeed, the work of humanizing religion has yet to be undertaken in earnest; it stands before us as a challenge that must be surmounted if we are to move forward.

Assessing the positive and negative impact of religion and religious belief in human history is a complex task, one which I will not attempt here. But by rising to the still unanswered challenge of truly humanizing religion, we must ensure that in the twenty-first century religion always functions to elevate and enhance our humanity, contributing to the realization of human happiness and peace.

In praise of the human spirit

In this regard, I have long noted with interest the stance toward religion taken by the great nineteenth-century historian Jules Michelet (1798-1874).

Michelet lived in an era known as the Oriental Renaissance. Just as the rediscovery of ancient Greek and Roman civilization had been critical in Europe's cultural renaissance several centuries earlier, mid-nineteenth-century Europe experienced a renewed interest in the "Oriental" cultures of India and Persia. This represented an attempt to move beyond the spatial and temporal limits of the Christian worldview. In some regards, the mood of that age was similar to that of our current era of globalization. In *The Bible of Humanity* (1864), Michelet writes:

What a happy age is ours! The soul of the Earth is harmonized via telegraph lines, united in its present. And through the lines of history and the comparison of different eras, it offers the sense of a fraternal past. It offers the joy of knowing that the soul of the Earth has lived in the same spirit. [\[11\]](#)

The reference to global communication "via telegraph lines" might remind us of our own Internet society. The middle years of the nineteenth century were the dawning of our modern scientific technological civilization. This, together with Michelet's optimistic character, contributed to the virtually unbounded expectations he held for the expansion of the frontiers of civilization under a unified understanding of the world.

In sharp contrast, our own age irrefutably displays the signs of the sunset of modern industrial civilization along the lines warned of more than thirty-five years ago in The Club of Rome's report, *The Limits to Growth*. There is a sense of impersonal sterility that haunts the rapid expansion of our Internet society. It is hard to find anything approaching the ebullience Michelet expressed for the possibilities of expanding communications technologies, that these will harmonize "the soul of the Earth."

In this sense, Michelet's era was one in which, perhaps because they were able to relativize their own civilization, Europeans felt confident about the limitless extent of human possibilities. This spirit of the age is clearly reflected in Michelet's own stance toward religion, which he sought to humanize. For Michelet, the "Bible of Humanity" is not limited to the Old and New Testaments but includes all the sacred texts of virtually all the world's classical civilizations (Chinese civilization being the exception). Declaring that "their author is humanity itself," [12] Michelet carefully examines and evenhandedly compares the Vedas and the Ramayana of India, the heroic epics and classic theater of ancient Greece, the Shahnameh (Book of Kings) of Persia, as well as the ancient works of Egypt and Assyria.

His research finally led Michelet to this bold conclusion: "Religion is comprised within the realm of spiritual activity; spiritual activity is not contained within religion." [13] This statement represents a clear, uncompromising humanization of religion, a rejection of all religious elements that would transcend or take precedence over the human being. Michelet declares:

We have seen the perfect accordance of Asia and Europe, the accordance of ancient times and our modern era. We have come to see that in any age people have thought, felt and loved in the same way. Thus, there is but one humanity, one heart, not two. A grand harmony that crosses both space and time has been restored forever. [14]

From the perspective of our present age, filled as it is with mistrust and frustration, we cannot help feeling distanced from Michelet's views. His hopeful paean to humanity issued at the dawn of modern civilization now strikes us as utopian and naive. His tracing of the genealogy of human flowering, from ancient India and Greece, through the "dark ages" of the medieval period, and into the Renaissance and the French Revolution with its values of liberty, fraternity and equality, was deeply betrayed by later historical developments. The twentieth century experienced two world wars, the horrors of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, and this has made us all too keenly aware of the double-edged nature of knowledge and of science and technology. (Likewise, the collapse of the Soviet Union put an end to the view of history as a natural progression from the French Revolution continuing through the Russian Revolution.)

But we must not, as the expression has it, throw out the baby with the bathwater. "Please! Let us be human! Let us be exalted by a new human grandeur such as has never before been known." [15] I agree: we should heed Michelet's plea and not lose sight of his core stance, which is that humanity must play the central role in the creation of history in all its aspects, including the religious. The success of our struggle for humanism will hinge on our ability to embrace and share this stance, to deepen it and pass it on to future generations.

It bears noting that Michelet's praise of the human being embodied a dynamism far removed from the vagueness, indeterminate emotionality and weakness that today seem to attach to the word "humanism." In contrast to subsequent incarnations of humanism, which were often an ersatz form of liberation that did nothing to rein in the expansion of the ego, Michelet's humanism was supported by a strong backbone of self-mastery, a belief in the normative nature and essence of the human spirit.

At the end of *The Bible of Humanity*, Michelet expresses his confidence that he stands in the legitimate heritage of history: "A torrent of light, a great river of Right and Reason, flows down from ancient India to the year 1789." [16] Asserting that "Identical in all ages, eternal Justice shines from a solid foundation of nature and history," [17] Michelet grounded himself in right, reason and justice. Mastering himself, recreating himself, he expressed the proud determination to be the protagonist of history. If the generous praise he lavishes on humanity is a centrifugal force, rushing out from the center of his being, self-discipline and self-mastery function centripetally, as a force that regulates and pulls back toward the center. The proper balance between these two forces is essential to the healthy functioning of the human soul.

While Michelet's concept of Right may differ in important regards from the Dharma--the law that Buddhism asserts is inherent in all life--his approach bears a striking resemblance to the Buddha's final admonition to his followers: "[L]ive as islands unto yourselves, being your own refuge, with no one else as your refuge, with the Dharma as an island, with the Dharma as your refuge, with no other refuge." [18] It would seem that this kind of self-directed, self-reliant seeking after

truth is as essential today as it was in ancient times for anyone desiring to be truly human, to be the main actor in the drama of life.

An engaged humanism

As Kazuo Watanabe warned, human beings do indeed possess the kind of "smallness and frailty" that drive us to become "the instruments and slaves of that which we created," and in the end history did not unfold along the lines Michelet had projected.

It is this smallness and frailty that makes individuals act against that which is human--*les hommes contre l'humain*, to use Gabriel Marcel's (1889-1973) phrase--thwarting our attempts to be the protagonists in the creation of history. The twentieth century--in which ideology attained the status of an absolute value, and fanaticism of all kinds stirred storms of war and violence--offers the most painful testimony to this fact. Here we see not the universal justice of which Michelet spoke, but partial and particular assertions of justice, each making its separate appeal to the smallness and frailty of human beings, each claiming its own absoluteness and locking horns in desperate struggle. This is the ultimate pitfall of an unchecked slide toward fundamentalism. Unconscious of the misery that awaits the fanatical pursuit of partial and particular assertions of justice, people are for the most part unable to resist their siren song.

If we are to halt this slide toward fanaticism, we cannot be content to regard it as passive bystanders. A true humanist cannot avoid or abandon the struggle against evil. Humanism, as mentioned, is a word and a concept with both positive aspects--peace and tolerance, moderation--and negative possibilities--a tendency for easy compromise and merely lukewarm commitment. Unless we can break through and rise above these negative aspects, we will not be capable of countering the extremism that is the special characteristic of fanaticism.

Kazuo Watanabe referred regularly to an essay by Thomas Mann (1875-1955), stating that "in a period of violent upheaval, it was first the book by my pillow, later the book in my duffle bag." [19] In the essay "Achtung, Europa!" Mann, who strived throughout his life to combat Nazism, issued a powerful call for what he called a "combative humanism."

The kind of humanism needed today is a combative humanism, one that knows its own valor, a humanism that is filled with the conviction not to allow the principles of freedom, tolerance and skepticism to be abused and trampled by fanaticism that knows no shame or doubt. [20]

Gide offered his enthusiastic support for Mann's idea of a combative humanism, calling it the most authentic form of humanism. It can be assumed that this humanism issues from the same source as Gide's, the universal value of humanity he posited as the basis for justice and which he declared was "more important than myself, more important than the U.S.S.R."

I sense here resonances with the spiritual struggle of Buddhist humanism. Today, the SGI's Buddhist movement has spread globally and enjoys the support of a wide range of sectors of society. I believe this is because we propound a universal humanism that transcends sectarian and dogmatic frameworks. In doing so, we have taken up the challenge that is so central to the history of civilization--the humanization of religion.

The key to waging a successful struggle for the ideals of humanism lies in dialogue, a challenge that is as old (and as new) as humanity itself. It is part of the essential nature of human beings to be dialogical; to abandon dialogue is in effect to abandon our humanity. Without dialogue, society is wrapped in the silence of the grave.

To the extent that we strive to be wise (*Homo sapiens*), we must strive to be masters of language and dialogue (*Homo loquens*). Throughout the ages, many have observed that dialogue is indeed the essential condition for rendering us human. Socrates declared: "there is no worse evil that a man could suffer than this--hating arguments. Misology (hatred of language) and misanthropy (hatred of human beings) spring from the same source." [21] The German physicist and philosopher Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker (1912-2007), whose brother, then President of Germany, I had the privilege of meeting with in 1991, defined human beings as "our actual partners for living and conversing." [22] In this way, he too positioned dialogue at the very heart of what it means to be human.

Rooted in the conviction that dialogue is the very lifeblood of religion, I have met with more than 7,000 thinkers and leaders in various fields, and have published almost 50 dialogues, beginning with that which I conducted with the British historian Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975) (published in English as *Choose Life* in 1976). My interlocutors have included representatives of the Christian and Confucian spheres of civilization, as well as people hailing from Islamic and Hindu civilizations--cultures with which Japan had relatively little historical contact. I conducted numerous dialogues with representatives of the former communist bloc. In terms of disciplines, my meetings with scholars have not been limited to specialists in the humanities but have included physicists, astronomers and other practitioners of the natural sciences.

The Buddhist scriptures teach that "immeasurable meanings derive from the one law." [23] In conducting these dialogues, I have based myself on my personal commitment to Buddhist humanism. I have been motivated by the desire to create, through the steady practice of dialogue, bridges linking different religions, civilizations and disciplines, and to contribute to making an open and universal humanism the tenor of the new era.

SGI representatives regularly participate in interfaith dialogue. For example, in the immediate aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks, the SGI represented the Buddhist tradition at a symposium on the role of religion in building peace sponsored by the European Academy of Sciences and Arts which was also attended by representatives of the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths. In addition, research institutions I have founded--the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research and the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century--are all actively engaged in promoting dialogue among religions and civilizations.

In the realm of religion, with its tragic legacy of fanaticism and intolerance, nothing is more vital than dialogue that transcends dogmatism and is predicated on the exercise of reason and self-mastery. For any religion to relinquish dialogue is to relinquish its reason for being. For the SGI, this means that in our quest to promote Buddhist humanism, we must never allow the banner of dialogue, the *sine qua non* of humanism, to fall--no matter how threatening the rejectionist forces of fanaticism, mistrust or dogmatism may loom.

Dialogue that is abandoned midway is meaningless. Genuine dialogue is that which is pursued consistently and with conviction. To manifest our true worth as *Homo loquens* requires that we wage this kind of committed spiritual struggle. And this requires that we bring forth our highest virtues as human beings: our goodness, strength and wisdom. To be worthy of the name, religions must offer us the means for unleashing these qualities: they must promote a revolutionary change in human beings. This was the reason that my Harvard address focused on the essential role Mahayana Buddhism can play in twenty-first-century civilization. This has been my consistent conviction.

Human rights framework

From this overall perspective, I would next like to discuss concrete actions and policies that can be implemented to resolve the complex global problems presently confronting humankind.

This year will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), an expression of the shared resolve never to repeat the horrors and tragedies of World War II. The UDHR is comprised of a total of thirty articles that set forth civil and political rights on the one hand and economic, social and cultural rights on the other. It opens with the noble preamble: "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world...." [24]

The Declaration has influenced the policymaking of governments and served as the basis for human rights-related conventions and institutions, as well as inspiring generations of human rights activists.

When it was adopted, the UDHR both gave voice to a universal vision of human rights and established the goal of bringing into being a world free from fear and free from want. Together with the United Nations Charter, likewise adopted in the wake of World War II, the UDHR signaled a new departure and charted a path to new modes of peaceful coexistence for humankind.

In the twenty-first century, the "horizontal" (spatial) axis of a universality that transcends national borders as advocated in the UDHR must be complemented by the "vertical" (temporal) axis of a sense of responsibility that extends to future generations. This is especially crucial in our efforts to construct a sustainable and peaceful global society.

Within this framework, I would like to focus my proposals on the following three areas: protecting the ecological integrity of the planet; upholding human dignity; and creating the infrastructures of peace.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948. It sets forth the inalienable rights and fundamental freedoms of each and every person on the face of the Earth.

These include civil and political rights such as the right not to be subjected to torture, to equality before the law, to a fair trial, to freedom of movement, to asylum and to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression. Economic, social and cultural rights are also set out, including the right to food, clothing, housing and medical care, to social security, to work, to equal pay for equal work, to form trade unions and to education.

In adopting the UDHR, the General Assembly called upon all member countries to publicize the text of the Declaration and "to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions...." It has been translated into 335 different languages, making it the most widely translated document in the world.

<http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/navigate/alpha.htm>

Protecting ecological integrity

In October 2007, the United Nations Environmental Programme's *Global Environment Outlook: environment for development (GEO-4)* was issued. According to this report, although air quality in some cities has improved, more than 2 million people globally are estimated to die prematurely each year due to air pollution. The Antarctic hole in the stratospheric ozone layer that gives protection from harmful ultraviolet radiation has grown to its largest extent ever.

Moreover, available freshwater per person has decreased on a global scale, and at least 16,000 species have been identified as threatened with extinction.

Progress has been made on the relatively simpler issues, but the more complex and intractable issues have yet to be addressed with any degree of adequacy. There is an urgent need for action.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

The IPCC is a scientific body established in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide information on climate change and options for adaptation and mitigation, and to evaluate the risk of human-induced climate change.

It consists of governments (the IPCC is open to member states of the WMO and UNEP) and scientists. While it does not conduct research or directly monitor climate-related phenomena, it publishes reports on topics relevant to the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It published assessment reports in 1990, 1995, 2001 and 2007.

The IPCC and former U.S. Vice President Al Gore shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of "their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change."

<http://www.ipcc.ch/>

The *Fourth Assessment Report* issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in November 2007 reveals that the sharp increase in CO₂ emissions in recent years has almost doubled the pace of the warming trend for the 50 years from 1956 to 2005 compared to that for the 100 years from 1906 to 2005. If present trends continue, the Earth's surface temperatures may rise by as much as 6.4 degrees Celsius by the end of the twenty-first century.

The report further warns that if global warming proceeds unchecked, the Arctic sea ice will continue to shrink, and droughts, heat waves, torrential rainfall and other extreme weather events are likely to increase in frequency. These changes could seriously threaten the very foundations of human existence on Earth.

The steadily deepening sense of urgency regarding environmental issues is reflected in the fact that climate change has consistently been on the agenda at recent annual summit meetings, culminating in the High-Level Event on Climate Change held at the UN Headquarters in September 2007. Nevertheless, international society lags in its attempt to come together in coordinated action.

Ecological integrity is the shared interest and concern of all humankind, an issue that transcends national borders and priorities. Any solution will require a strong sense of individual responsibility and commitment by each of us as inhabitants sharing the same planet.

The founding president of the Soka Gakkai, the educator and geographer Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944), stressed that individuals should be aware of three levels of citizenship: our local roots and commitments based in our immediate community; our sense of belonging to a national community; and an appreciation of the fact that the world is ultimately the stage on which we live our lives and that we are all citizens of the world. On this basis, he urged that people transcend an excessive or exclusive attachment to national interests and develop an active awareness of their commitment to humankind as a whole.

This was the principle underlying the SGI's call in 2002 for a UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and our subsequent collaboration with relevant UN agencies and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) toward the realization and implementation of the Decade.

We are living at a time when concerted, committed action--for the sake of the entire Earth and all humankind--is acutely needed. The United Nations is the global institution that can serve as the facilitating focus for such efforts. The UN has, for example, developed and coordinated environmental activities through the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which hosts the secretariats of various international environmental treaties, and promotes sustainable development and environmental protection programs through a network of six regional offices.

In recognition of UNEP's solid record of achievement, there are calls for the expansion of its capacity in order to enable it better to respond to global environmental threats that continue to grow in complexity and magnitude. A common understanding was reached regarding such demands at the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum held in Nairobi in February 2007. There, the need for a stronger institutional framework to collect and analyze scientific findings and to coordinate the drafting, adoption and implementation of environmental conventions was emphasized, and an upgrading of UNEP from programme to agency status was called for.

It has long been my view that global environmental issues would constitute one of the UN's principal missions in the twenty-first century. In my 2002 peace proposal, I suggested the establishment of the office of a UN high commissioner for the environment, with a core mandate to coordinate the activities of various agencies and exercise strong leadership toward the resolution of global environmental issues. Thus I would like to join my voice to those calling for UNEP to be strengthened and upgraded to the status of a specialized agency, a world environmental organization.

The key reason I support such moves is that, at present, only those countries that serve on the UNEP Governing Council are able to participate directly in its debates and decision making. If UNEP is accorded the status of a specialized agency, however, any country that chooses to become a member state will find a place at the table.

A similar vision underlay the call I made in 1978 for the creation of an "Environmental United Nations." Developing an institutional framework that enables all states to engage with environmental issues will be of utmost importance, especially toward the widely acknowledged goal of establishing effective global environmental governance.

In this, the need to combat climate change is recognized as a paramount challenge. At the Heiligendamm Summit held in Germany in June 2007, the G8 leaders gave serious consideration to the goal of halving global greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. But at present the only existing framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions is the one based on the Kyoto Protocol, which will expire at the end of 2012. Clearly, it is vital that any new framework ensure global participation, particularly by the countries that were not included in the existing framework, if the 50-percent reduction is to be achieved.

In December 2007, the United Nations Climate Change Conference was held in Bali, Indonesia. There the Bali Roadmap, which charts the course toward the creation of a post-2012 framework, was adopted. Although stopping short of setting specific emission reduction targets, it represents a degree of progress, as the United States, India and China--major sources of greenhouse gas emissions that were not part of the Kyoto Protocol framework--all agreed to participate in the process.

I would urge all parties pursuing the negotiations to be held under the Bali Roadmap to break away from the negative approach of minimizing national obligations and burdens and instead adopt a positive focus on the achievement of larger, global objectives. This kind of fundamental reorientation is essential.

Combating climate change is a challenge that demands us all to rise above the constraints of self-interest. We need to build an international framework of cooperation and solidarity against this threat. Specifically, I would ask the major emitters to take the initiative in establishing ambitious goals and implementing bold and effective policies while actively supporting the efforts of other countries. In this way, I hope they will engage in positively oriented competition aimed at making the greatest contribution to the resolution of this planetary crisis.

In a book published in 1903, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi called for "humanitarian competition" among states. This was a vision of an international order in which the world's diverse states strive to positively influence each other, to coexist and flourish together rather than pursuing narrowly defined national interests at each other's expense. I feel that the work of solving the global environmental crisis provides a unique opportunity to move toward such a world. It is my earnest hope that Japan, which assumes the G8 Presidency for the Hokkaido Toyako Summit in July this year, will lead the way in fostering positive attitudes and approaches appropriate to the needs of the new era.

Regarding the most effective means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, I would like to focus on the transformation toward a low-carbon no-waste society. The first step toward this must be the introduction of renewable energy and energy conservation measures. The proactive setting of goals and commitments will unleash the kinds of positive thinking that take, for example, the form of technological innovation.

The European Union has already taken important steps to encourage the use of renewable energy sources. Agreement reached at the EU Heads of States and Government meeting held in March 2007 requires EU member states to increase their use of solar and other renewable sources of energy, setting a binding target of raising the share of renewable energies in overall EU energy consumption from the current 6.5 percent to 20 percent by 2020.

Parallel to this, energy conservation and enhanced energy efficiency are critical in the transition to a low-carbon no-waste society. Japan has a wealth of experience and achievement in this field and should play an active role, collaborating closely with its neighbors, in developing East Asia into a global model of energy efficiency.

In my 2007 peace proposal, I called for the creation of an East Asia environment and development organization as a pilot model of regional cooperation and the kernel for the eventual creation of an East Asian Union. It would be desirable, as one step toward this long-term goal, for Japan to take the lead in energy conservation issues.

In addition to "top-down" reform through institutional reframing, it is crucial to encourage "bottom-up" change by broadening grassroots engagement and empowering people toward collective action. This conviction underpinned my call for a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. I believe strongly in the power of learning. Empowerment through learning brings out the unlimited potentials of individuals and consequently creates currents, first within the respective regions, and eventually globally across borders, that can fundamentally transform the world in which we live.

The Bali Roadmap

The Bali Roadmap is an agreement that was adopted at the end of a 13-day conference in December 2007 on the island of Bali, Indonesia, organized by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and attended by representatives from over 180 countries. The Roadmap charts a two-year negotiation process to tackle climate change, with the aim of concluding a binding agreement to succeed the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol, due to expire in 2012, set targets for the developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Roadmap does not specify any concrete emission reduction goals but it does acknowledge that "deep cuts in global emissions will be required to achieve the ultimate objective" of avoiding dangerous climate change. It sets the framework for negotiations for a long-term agreement and includes the United States, which had remained outside the Kyoto Protocol.

The negotiation process is scheduled to be completed at a summit in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2009, to give states time to ratify the treaty so that it takes effect at the end of 2012.

http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop_13/items/4049.php

The SGI supported the production of the educational film *A Quiet Revolution* in collaboration with the Earth Council, UNEP and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2001, as well as the exhibition "Seeds of Change: The Earth Charter and Human Potential," which was initially created in collaboration with the Earth Charter Initiative. These tools have been used to promote the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development since its inception.

Prior to the start of the Decade, the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century supported the drafting process of the Earth Charter, a declaration of fundamental principles and values for building a just and sustainable global society.

In the area of environmental protection, SGI-Brazil founded the Amazon Ecological Research Center in 1993. The center has since been collecting and preserving seeds of tree species critical for the integrity of the Amazonian ecosystem. Meanwhile, SGI organizations in Canada, the Philippines and elsewhere have also been engaged in tree-planting activities.

When I met in February 2005 with Nobel Peace laureate and founder of the Green Belt Movement, Dr. Wangari Maathai, our dialogue focused on the deeper meaning of planting trees. We discussed Shakyamuni, who taught the profound value of tree planting 2,500 years ago, and King Ashoka, the ancient Indian ruler known for his renunciation of war and his policies of nonviolence, compassion and tolerance, who implemented programs to protect the environment, among them establishing mango groves and planting trees along thoroughfares. The Green Belt Movement has greatly contributed to the empowerment of women, and we concurred that "to plant trees is to plant life"--to sow and foster the seeds of the future, of a peaceful society.

Merely acquiring knowledge about environmental issues is not enough to make the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development meaningful. It is vital that individuals tangibly perceive the irreplaceable value of the ecosystem of which they are an integral part, and make a commitment to its protection. Such awareness is best developed through the kind of hands-on experience participation in tree-planting projects affords.

The Billion Trees Campaign, promoted by UNEP and originally inspired by Dr. Maathai, is a striking global grassroots initiative to counter climate change. The Campaign has been a rousing success, with 1.9 billion trees planted during 2007 and a goal of planting another billion trees in 2008. This will provide vitally important opportunities for experiential learning, and I hope linkages with the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development will be deepened as this program goes forward.

The success of the Decade and, more crucially, of efforts to slow and reverse ecological degradation, hinges on each individual's ability to feel this as a personal challenge and take concrete action on that basis. We need to think about and discuss what we--on the individual, family, community and workplace level--can do in our immediate environment to build a sustainable future, and work together to this end.

This approach may be thought of as an action network for a sustainable future. There is no reason for this network to be limited to environmental issues. By expanding cooperation and collaborative links with activities in such areas as poverty alleviation, human rights and peace, we can build the solid foundations of a common struggle to resolve the shared problems facing humanity. The SGI is committed to playing an ever more active role in building such an action network.

Upholding human dignity

During the final years of his life, I had the privilege of conducting a dialogue with former Brazilian Academy of Letters president Austregilo de Athayde (1898-1993), who played an important role in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In our dialogue, Mr. Athayde looked back on the drafting process and made this remark: "In drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and considering a number of difficult questions we faced, there was one point to which I paid particular care; that is, to create spiritual bonds among the peoples of the world and, more specifically, to establish the universality of the spirit." [\[25\]](#)

Mr. Athayde thus participated in the drafting work with a firm conviction that it was essential to develop bonds that were loftier, broader and more enduring in order to bring the world's peoples together. Indeed, connections between countries that are contingent on the changing conditions that govern economic and political relations are too fragile and impermanent to serve as the foundation of lasting peace.

As mentioned, 2008 marks the sixtieth anniversary of the UDHR. A yearlong campaign was launched on December 10 last year, at the initiative of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights under the theme "Dignity and Justice for All of Us" to communicate the vision of the Declaration. To make this anniversary substantive, it is vital that governments and civil society work together to actively promote concrete programs that bring human rights education to all.

I have repeatedly stressed the importance of establishing an ongoing global framework for human rights education, as I did in my message to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa, in August 2001. After the conclusion of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), the UN launched the World Programme for Human Rights Education in January 2005. This kind of continuity is of the utmost importance.

Human rights issues must not only be debated actively among governments; we must establish a shared global culture of human rights that is rooted in the realities of daily life and based on unflinching and uncompromising respect for human dignity.

The promotion of human rights education was cited in a General Assembly resolution as one of the primary tasks of the Human Rights Council, a body established in 2006 as part of the UN reform process. In September 2007, the Council determined to prepare a draft declaration on human rights education and training. Once adopted, this declaration will be added to the existing human rights standards under international law, alongside the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights. It is crucial that the drafting process take into sufficient consideration civil society's perspectives and concerns and that the resulting document be one that genuinely promotes a culture of human rights rooted in people's daily lives.

To that end I would urge the holding of an international conference specifically dedicated to the theme of human rights education to gather broad-ranging views from civil society as an integral part of the drafting process. Although regional conferences and small-scale meetings of experts have been held to discuss human rights education, no full-scale international conference has yet been realized. Such a conference, focusing on civil society and held at the initiative of civil society, would be able to discuss not only the new declaration but also measures to ensure the success of the World Programme for Human Rights Education.

Here, I would like to call attention once more to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which aim to establish the social and life-supporting infrastructure that is indispensable to maintaining human dignity. The MDGs include such concrete objectives as reducing by half the number of people suffering from poverty and hunger, and the year 2007 represented the halfway point toward the target date of 2015. According to the UN progress assessment, there is real concern that these goals will not be attained at the present pace, despite improvements in such areas as primary school enrollment in developing countries and declines in the extreme poverty rate and child mortality.

In July 2007, the leaders of the U.S., Canada, Japan, Ghana, Brazil, India and a number of European countries signed the Declaration on the Millennium Development Goals by Heads of State. U.K. Prime Minister Gordon Brown took the lead in calling for this declaration; it confirms the importance of mustering the political will in both developed and developing countries to bring together "the right policies and right reforms... combined with sufficient resources." [\[26\]](#)

The UN designated the years 2005-15 as the International Decade for Action "Water for Life" and 2008 as the International Year of Sanitation. In this context, I would like to urge the creation of a global framework that brings together the right policies, the right reforms and sufficient resources to secure access to safe water and sanitary living conditions for all the world's people.

Today, more than 1 billion people are denied the right to safe water, and 2.6 billion do not have access to adequate sanitation. As a result, about 1.8 million children die every year from diarrhea and other diseases. Moreover, the burden of collecting water falls unevenly on the millions of women and girls charged with doing this for their families every day. This in turn reinforces gender inequalities in employment and education. Chronic ill health due to the lack of safe water and sanitation undermines productivity and economic growth, deepening global inequalities and trapping vulnerable people in cycles of poverty.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) considers overcoming the water and sanitation crisis to be one of the crucial human development challenges for the first half of this century, and stresses that success here will without doubt advance progress toward achieving all the MDGs. It is estimated that the cost of providing safe water and sanitation to all would require the additional expenditure of around 10 billion U.S. dollars per year. This amount, however, is the equivalent to a mere eight days of world military spending. The UNDP *Human Development Report 2006* states:

In terms of enhancing human security, as distinct from more narrowly defined notions of national security, the conversion of even small amounts of military spending into water and sanitation investments would generate very large returns. [\[27\]](#)

One example of an effective framework for providing financial resources to help achieve the MDGs is the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, founded in 2002. The Global Fund is innovative in that it strives to ensure the "ownership" of projects by the developing countries. Programs that reflect the needs of different countries are supported,

and financial resources are directed to areas of greatest need through independent review processes, rather than assigning predetermined budgets to each region and disease.

The Fund's board members represent not only governments but also the private sector, NGOs from both developed and developing countries, as well as patient advocacy groups. All parties have an equal voice and vote, which ensures that their diverse views will be reflected in the decision-making process.

In this connection, I would like to propose the establishment of a world fund for water for life as a step toward securing the kind of funding and focused strategies that will ensure the rapid amelioration of conditions that continue to threaten the dignity of so many people.

"Human security... is a concern with human dignity." These are the words of Dr. Mahbub ul-Haq (1934-98), who, in a keynote speech at an international conference organized by the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research in June 1997, emphasized that "...it is easier, more humane, and less costly to deal with the new issues of human security upstream rather than face their tragic consequences downstream...." [28]

Dr. Haq, who was one of the great collaborators of the Toda Institute from its inception, also pioneered the concept of human development, a core element of the Human Development, Regional Conflict, and Global Governance (HUGG2) project, which the Toda Institute initiated two years ago.

Dr. Haq wrote that human security should be reflected in people's lives in concrete terms: "a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread." [29] In this sense, the effort to achieve the MDGs must be focused on not only meeting targets but also restoring the well-being of the individual who is suffering.

Eliminating the word "misery" from the human lexicon was the fervent wish of my mentor, Soka Gakkai second president Josei Toda (1900-58). The Toda Institute was inspired by Toda's philosophy of peace. It will continue to sponsor international conferences and research to support the achievement of the MDGs, sustainable development and other endeavors to advance human development on a global scale.

Human dignity in the century of Africa

I would now like to turn my attention to Africa, as its future is critical in building a global society that upholds human dignity.

In the quest for lasting peace and sustainable growth, the nations of Africa have, since entering the twenty-first century, embarked on a new challenge with the African Union (AU) playing the pivotal role. Founded in July 2002 as a successor to the Organization for African Unity (OAU) and comprising fifty-three countries and territories, the AU is the world's largest regional organization. Rapid progress is being made toward establishing the institutional framework that will ensure its effectiveness, with the Assembly of Heads of State and Government as its supreme organ, as well as the Pan-African Parliament, the Peace and Security Council, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council and the Court of Justice.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up under the terms of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act in 1995 in Cape Town, South Africa. Its mandate was to bear witness to, record and in some cases grant amnesty to perpetrators of crimes related to human rights violations during the era of apartheid between 1960 and 1994. A very public forum, it differed from a military or criminal tribunal in that the perpetrators of human rights violations voluntarily spoke about their crimes in return for the possibility of amnesty, thus opening the way to a healing process for victims and perpetrators and society as a whole.

Chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the TRC consisted of three committees: the Human Rights Violations Committee, the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee and the Amnesty Committee, which considered applications from individuals who applied for amnesty. The commission heard testimony about acts committed by the apartheid government as well as the liberation forces, including the ANC. The TRC's approach, seeking an airing of painful truths as a condition for reconciliation rather than prosecution or retribution, has subsequently been followed by other countries as a model for post-transition processes following regime change.

Over the years, I have dedicated myself to engaging in dialogue with African leaders and experts in various fields and promoting cultural and educational exchange on a people-to-people level. In this, I have been motivated by the conviction that the twenty-first century will be the century of Africa. In this regard, I sincerely hope that the AU undertaking will bear abundant fruit to the benefit of the people of Africa.

It is my unchanging belief that an African Renaissance will herald a renaissance of the world and of humanity.

In fact, many of the important initiatives to transform vicious cycles of human tragedy in recent decades have originated in the African continent. This is seen, for example, in the work of the people of South Africa under the leadership of President Nelson Mandela to dismantle apartheid and conduct the Truth and Reconciliation process, as well as in the empowerment of women and environmental protection realized by the Green Belt Movement led by Dr. Wangari Maathai of Kenya. These transformative initiatives are generating interest and inspiring similar undertakings around the world. Recent years have seen the resolution of several civil wars and conflicts in Africa. There have been important transitions to civilian government, and many parts of the continent have seen improved rates of economic growth.

This is not to understate the seriousness of the issues Africa faces. There are ongoing conflicts such as those in the Darfur region and Somalia, as well as dire poverty and desperate refugee situations, and the fact is that in much of Sub-Saharan Africa progress toward the realization of the MDGs has been woefully inadequate.

Today, African nations, which have refused to succumb under the historical burdens of the slave trade and colonialism, are striving to forge solidarity as they unleash their potential and confront their common challenges. This is an undertaking of enormous significance.

The adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a concrete manifestation of such solidarity. It is a pledge by African leaders to strive for peace and security, democracy, stable economic governance and people-centered development based on a shared recognition that Africa "holds the key to its own development." It is crucial that the international community actively support this ambitious project of the people of Africa.

In May 2008, the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) will be held in Yokohama, Japan. This conference was initiated by Japan in 1993 and has since been held every five years in conjunction with the United Nations and other co-organizers. Participants include African heads of state and representatives of international organizations; the conference serves as a vital forum for sharing a common awareness of the problems Africa faces and for exploring solutions.

I would like to urge that the discussions focus on concrete measures to ensure that the empowerment of youth is at the heart of all policy proposals. It is critical that we take measures now to break the vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty and poor living conditions. Improved conditions for young people will be the linchpin of a transition to a positive cycle of step-by-step improvements in the living conditions of people of all generations.

TICAD has promoted human resources development through ensuring access to basic education, support for learning centers and vocational training. I would like to urge that, building on these achievements, a program for African youth partnership be established as one of the pillars of TICAD, helping foster the talents of the young people who will play a critical role in creating a brighter future for Africa.

I would also like to call for the creation of a network of and for youth, facilitating ties of exchange between the young people of Africa and the youth of Japan and countries throughout the world, as a platform for confronting the challenges faced not only in Africa but around the globe. This year, 2008, has been designated the Japan-Africa Exchange Year. I would hope that the events of the Exchange Year will become the starting point for the establishment of programs of regular exchange between Japanese and African youth and students.

Creating the infrastructures of peace

At the height of Cold War tensions, seeking to reduce these tensions and prevent further escalation of the arms race, I called for summit meetings between the leaders of the superpowers and engaged in citizen diplomacy to encourage dialogue and exchange. At a time when, in addition to the U.S.-Soviet confrontation, tensions between China and the Soviet Union were at a critical level (1974-75), I traveled to all three countries in a private capacity, meeting, among others, with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai (1898-1976), Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin (1904-80) and U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Through such efforts, I hoped to build bridges that would lead to improved relations.

In this I was driven by the determination to prevent at all costs full-scale nuclear warfare, which would have catastrophic effects for the entire human race, and to put an end to the wars that were dividing the world and inflicting massive suffering upon people. With the end of the Cold War, while the threat of full-scale nuclear warfare has receded, we now face new and emerging dangers in the form of nuclear proliferation.

In my 2007 peace proposal, I called for a transition to a system of security that is not reliant on nuclear weapons, and to this end urged the establishment of an international nuclear disarmament agency to ensure the good-faith fulfillment of existing legal commitments to nuclear disarmament.

Equally essential to nuclear abolition is establishing consensus within the international community regarding the fundamental illegality of nuclear weapons. As one element of this, I would like to focus on the call issued in August 2007 by the Canadian Pugwash Group for the establishment of an Arctic Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ). The SGI, as an advocate of a nuclear-weapon-free world, lends support to this call, in the spirit of Josei Toda's 1957 declaration calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

The Arctic Ocean occupied a position of strategic geopolitical importance during the Cold War with nuclear-powered submarines of the Eastern and Western blocs traveling under the icecap carrying their ominous cargo of ballistic missiles. If, as a result of global warming, the polar icecap recedes or even disappears during the summer months, this could open the way for an increased militarization of the Arctic region. It could also spark an international scramble to develop

transportation, seabed and other resources, causing a clash of interests between the concerned countries. For this reason, there is an urgent need to prohibit military activity in the region, build a legal regime to conserve it as a common heritage of humankind, and establish an Arctic Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone.

The Antarctic Treaty of 1959 banned all military activity on the world's southernmost continent, specifically outlawing nuclear explosions and disposal of radioactive waste south of 60 degrees south latitude. Since then, a total of five regional treaties prohibiting the development, manufacture, possession, transportation, receipt, testing and use of nuclear weapons have been signed, and NWFZs have expanded to include Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Africa and Central Asia.

The NWFZs, covering most of the landmass of the southern hemisphere, serve as a curb against nuclear proliferation in the respective regions. Furthermore, they help strengthen momentum toward the outlawing of nuclear weapons. Together with Mongolia, which declared its nuclear-weapon-free status in 2000, well over 100 countries--more than half the governments on Earth--have become signatories to these agreements, thus expressing their view that the development and use of nuclear weapons is or should be illegal under international law.

I would hope to see further moves toward the creation of other NWFZs, as this will solidify the trend toward making the illegality of nuclear weapons the shared norm of humankind, leading ultimately to an international treaty for the comprehensive prohibition of nuclear weapons, banning their development, acquisition, possession and use.

As a step toward this, I would like to call for the establishment of a treaty prohibiting military use of and denuclearizing the Arctic region under the aegis of the United Nations. In this endeavor Japan, as a country that directly experienced the horrors of nuclear war and which upholds as core national policy the three nonnuclear principles of not possessing, developing or allowing nuclear weapons onto its national territory, should take the initiative, working with other states and civil society partners seeking a nuclear-free world.

I believe that a similar approach would be effective in terms of nuclear nonproliferation in Northeast Asia. All efforts should continue through the Six-Party Talks toward the complete dismantling of North Korea's nuclear weapons program. At the same time, Japan should reaffirm its uncompromising commitment to its own nonnuclear policies, and should deploy its full diplomatic resources toward the more encompassing goal of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone covering the whole of Northeast Asia.

The mobilization of international public opinion is indispensable to any attempt to reduce and eventually outlaw nuclear weapons. With this in mind, I proposed a decade of action by the world's people for nuclear abolition in a proposal for UN reform which I authored in August 2006, to help focus grassroots energies to make the necessary breakthrough.

Last year, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Josei Toda's declaration calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons, the SGI launched the international exhibition "From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace: Transforming the Human Spirit." This was a concrete initiative to promote nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation education as advocated by the United Nations. Since the 1980s, the SGI has organized a series of exhibitions to raise public awareness of the perils of nuclear weapons, cooperating in this with the United Nations and various civil society partners. We are determined to continue these activities, working with the Pugwash Conferences and other partners that share the goal of building grassroots consensus for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons. We regard such efforts as an integral aspect of our mission as Buddhists to promote respect for the sanctity of life.

My next proposal toward building the infrastructures of peace is to call for the early signing of a treaty banning so-called "cluster bombs." These weapons spread numerous submunitions over a wide area. They indiscriminately kill and maim people in the target area, and the bomblets that remain unexploded put lives at risk for years after a conflict has ended, causing serious hindrance to reconstruction.

As many as 440 million submunitions have already been used in 24 countries and territories, killing and injuring an estimated 100,000 people. Some 73 countries still continue to stockpile cluster bombs.

The Cluster Munition Coalition, a network of civil society organizations calling for the conclusion of an international treaty banning the use, production and stockpiling of cluster munitions, was formed in 2003. The movement has gained momentum, and in February 2007 a conference attended by more than 40 governments and representatives of civil society was held in Oslo, Norway, to frame a new treaty to ban cluster munitions. From this conference, an initiative called the Oslo Process was launched, which, like the Ottawa Process that produced the 1997 treaty banning land mines, brings NGOs and interested states together in shared action.

Discussions are under way within the framework of the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) to address the issue of cluster bombs, but they have as yet failed to make any significant progress. Thus, while it is of course desirable that as many states as possible eventually become parties, priority must be placed on getting a treaty signed and in place by the end of this year as called for in the Oslo Process. And just as the Ottawa Treaty has over the past decade attained the weight of an international humanitarian norm that discourages even nonsignatory states from

using land mines, a similar consensus must be built in global society against cluster bombs.

The success of such efforts with strong civil society support will have a definite and positive impact on momentum toward disarmament in other fields.

East Asian infrastructure for peace

Lastly, I would like to address the future prospects for Sino-Japanese relations and the creation of infrastructures for peace throughout the East Asia region.

Thirty years have now passed since the signing of the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship. Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai voiced his strong expectation for the conclusion of such a treaty when I met with him in December 1974. I wholeheartedly shared his vision. I met with U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger the following month, and conveyed Premier Zhou's desire for Sino-Japanese friendship and my commitment to this. Dr. Kissinger expressed his support for a treaty.

I visited China again in April 1975 and discussed the importance of the early conclusion of a friendship treaty with Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping (1904-97), who entrusted me with a message to Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Miki (1907-88). Government-level negotiations resumed soon after, and the treaty was signed in August 1978, opening a new chapter in Sino-Japanese relations.

Exchanges in diverse fields have developed since, and economic interdependence continues to grow. China is now Japan's largest trading partner, surpassing even the U.S., and in 2006 more than 4.7 million people traveled between the two countries.

In recent years, summit meetings of Japanese and Chinese leaders have been held on a regular basis, signaling an active will to build cooperative relations. In April 2007, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao made an official visit to Japan and held talks with the Japanese Prime Minister, leading to a joint press statement which defined bilateral policy: "Both countries will strengthen coordination and cooperation, and tackle regional and global challenges together." [\[30\]](#)

During his visit, I also had the pleasure of conferring with the Chinese Premier and was deeply impressed by his statement that closer Sino-Japanese friendship is the general trend and shared aspiration of both peoples.

In December 2007, Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda visited China and held talks with President Hu Jintao and other leaders, agreeing on a joint statement announcing cooperation on environmental and energy issues, as well as youth exchanges.

It has been four decades since I first called for the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations, and I welcome with deep gratification the significant steps that China and Japan have taken toward building a solid partnership for the peace, security and development of Asia and the world.

In addition to this warming in Sino-Japanese relations, there has also been steady improvement in Japan's relations with South Korea. Strengthened ties between the three countries have helped the East Asia Summit in its evolution as a venue for exploring new modalities of regional cooperation.

In November 2007, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) held a summit where agreement was reached on an ASEAN Charter that upholds such objectives as the promotion of peace, security and stability in the region, the alleviation of poverty and the preservation of the nuclear-weapon-free status of Southeast Asia. At the same meeting, the ASEAN states set out a blueprint for the creation of an ASEAN Economic Community by 2015.

It is my conviction that if China, South Korea and Japan, together with ASEAN, continue to make tenacious efforts toward cooperation and coordination, it will be possible to consolidate the enduring infrastructures for peace in East Asia.

Starting in 2007, the Japanese government initiated a five-year program to invite 6,000 young people annually, principally from China, South Korea and the ASEAN nations, to study in Japan. As one who has long advocated greater youth and educational exchange in East Asia, I have great hopes for the success of this program. And I would wish that this opportunity to deepen understanding and friendship will also be a chance for the young people of the region to develop a shared sense of awareness and responsibility for the future. I would propose, for example, that opportunities be created to meet and talk with the staff of UN agencies and to learn from the environmental and disarmament programs promoted by the UN.

Ultimately, young people hold the keys to the future: humanity is in their hands. This is the shared conviction of virtually all the leaders and experts with whom I have met and engaged in dialogue.

The Soka Gakkai's second president Josei Toda declared: "The new century will be created by the power and passion of youth." Embracing the words and spirit he bequeathed to us, all the members of the SGI are determined to maintain a focus on youth and young people, fostering their limitless potential as we build grassroots solidarity to resolve the complex issues facing our planet.

Notes:

- 1 Pauling and Ikeda, *Seimei no seiki*, 15-16.
- 2 Ban, "Remarks at the Inauguration."
- 3 Sarkozy, "Sarkozy Wants."
- 4 C.f. Plato, *The Republic*, 268.
- 5 Hermanns, *Einstein and the Poet*, 53.
- 6 Gide, *Retour de l'U.R.S.S.*, 13.
- 7 Nichiren, *Writings*, vol. 2, 843-44.
- 8 Watanabe, *Kyoki ni tsuite*, 163.
- 9 Ikeda, "Mahayana Buddhism."
- 10 Wiesel, *And the Sea Is Never Full*, 370.
- 11 Michelet, *Bible de l'humanité*, II.
- 12 Ibid., 484.
- 13 Ibid., IV.
- 14 Ibid., 13.
- 15 Ibid., 283.
- 16 Ibid., 485.
- 17 Ibid., 484.
- 18 Walshe, *Mahaparinibbana*, 245.
- 19 Watanabe, *Kyoki ni tsuite*, 120-21.
- 20 Mann, "Achtung, Europa!" 159-60.
- 21 Plato, *Phaedo*, 94-95.
- 22 Weizsäcker, *Der Mensch in seiner Geschichte*, 15.
- 23 Nichiren, *Writings*, 295.
- 24 UN, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights."
- 25 Athayde and Ikeda, *21 seiki no jinken wo kataru*, 128-29.
- 26 DFID, "Declaration on the Millennium."
- 27 UNDP, "Human Development Report 2006."
- 28 Haq, "Global Governance for Human Security," 80.
- 29 Haq, *Reflections on Human Development*, 116.
- 30 MOFA, "Japan-China Joint Press Statement."

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