

SGI-Canada Sponsors Peace Conference
Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER
Toronto, Canada, June 6–8

What will it take for humankind to eradicate war and misery from the world as we look toward a new millennium? Some 130 scholars gathered from Canada, the United States, Europe, Russia and Japan to grapple with this question at an SGI-Canada co-sponsored conference here.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and SGI President Ikeda sent messages to the conference, which was titled “The Evolution of World Order: Building a Foundation for Peace in the Third Millennium.” Mr. Annan asserted that sustainable development, one of the primary focuses of the United Nations, is essential in creating sustainable peace. And he stressed the importance of grass-roots efforts toward such development, for without citizen participation, he said, government efforts to improve people’s lives hardly stand a chance.

Mr. Ikeda held that what is crucial is a shift from national interests to the interest of humanity as a whole. Stating that a fundamental change in both external systems and the inner values of individuals represent a genuinely holistic approach to peace, Mr. Ikeda praised the efforts of the conference to unite the wisdom of experts from the “hardware” aspects of politics, economics and science and the “software” side of religion, philosophy, education and ethics.

Following the opening ceremony, held at Oakham House at Ryerson Polytechnic University, separate sessions were held to discuss issues related to U.N. reform.

A lively exchange was sparked among the participants by lectures from Dr. Anatol Rapoport, professor at the University of Toronto and an advisor to the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research; Leonard Johnson, chairperson of the Canadian Pugwash Group; and Geoffrey Pearson, former director of the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security.

The second day moved on to broader topics concerning the environment and human society. An open forum was also held titled “Spirituality and the Evolution of World Order,” where Yoichi Kawada, Institute of Oriental Philosophy director and Soka Gakkai vice president, spoke on Buddhist perspectives of peace.

On the third and final day, the conference moved to the SGI-Canada Caledon Center for Culture and Education. Just opened last year in a suburb of Toronto, the SGI facility is surrounded by a lush green setting.

SGI-Canada Chairperson Elizabeth Izumi welcomed the scholars and spoke about the ideals of the SGI and the Caledon center’s main purpose of fostering global citizens.

The conference came to a close with talks on the issues of disarmament, security and the goal of lasting peace.

Cosponsors included Science for Peace; the United Nations Association Canada, Toronto Branch; Ryerson Polytechnic University, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science; Voice of Women; Millennium Council of Canada; and the International Society for Systems Sciences, Canada Division.

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