

SGI Leader Greets Ghana President, First Lady
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What kind of education and leadership does Africa, which SGI President Ikeda calls the continent of the new century, need to propel itself forward? President Ikeda and the president and first lady of Ghana discussed this today.

Earlier in the day, President Jerry John Rawlings and first lady Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings attended the opening of an exhibit commemorating the 40th anniversary of Ghana's independence at the Min-On Culture Center and received honors from Soka University and Soka Women's College, respectively.

Noting that President Rawlings had received the overwhelming support of the people of Ghana and been re-elected to office for a second term in December 1996, Mr. Ikeda related a powerful part of his inaugural speech. "Today, not only do we face the challenge of moving our nation forward, we also carry the responsibility of contributing to move the continent of Africa forward," said President Rawlings then. "It is a challenge that appears awesome to contemplate, humbling to our senses, and yet it is a challenge that we are obliged to face with courage, with fortitude and with confidence."

The SGI leader also shared the words of Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah (1909–72), who said that only when the people are organized can they display their true ability. When people are divided and isolated, Mr. Ikeda emphasized, they are weak.

For precisely this reason, he said, organizations are necessary and leaders are important. President Nkrumah also maintained that the most important duty of leaders is to spend time with and listen to the people to whom they owe their positions, Mr. Ikeda added. The SGI president declared that President Rawlings is a leader of the people who has truly carried on Dr. Nkrumah's spirit.

Dr. Nkrumah, the SGI leader continued, envisioned that, after achieving political autonomy, Ghana would gain economic independence — but that some kind of "jet propulsion" would be necessary to realize this.

Mr. Ikeda credited President Rawlings, who holds the Ghanaian Air Force rank of flight-lieutenant, with being the great pilot who has provided this propulsion and guided the country's brilliant economic development. Ghana's minister of foreign affairs, J.V. Gbeho, who was also present today, explained that the Ghanaian people have been working to reconstruct their country since the coup of 1981, and that the achievements of the country's first president had provided the groundwork for this reconstruction.

Mr. Ikeda observed that, in addition to his efforts on behalf of young people, President Rawlings is well known for the emphasis that he has placed on education. Noting that Ghana allocates 40 percent of its national budget to that field, he applauded President Rawlings for not compromising when it comes to education.

Mr. Rawlings said that education is the foundation for building a stable nation. The government, he offered, should not take power away from the citizens and enslave them but rather empower them. To that end, education is vital, he said.

Addressing Mrs. Rawlings, the SGI leader praised her, as president of the 31st December Women's Movement, for energetically dedicating herself to such concerns as improving the standing of women in society, working to alleviate the problem of poverty and educating people about democracy.

He noted that she is also known for visiting rural areas, on which the country's prosperity greatly depends.

In one interview, Mr. Ikeda recalled, Mrs. Rawlings said that at the time of

independence, the women of Ghana had been key participants in political activities and an active force in driving the foreign colonialists out. And in December 1981, feeling that they had remained in the shadows far too long, the women of Ghana organized themselves with the desire to support the country's reconstruction.

President Rawlings shared the thoughts of the Ghanaian educator Kwegyir-Aggrey who said that when you educate a man, you educate one person; when you educate a woman, you educate the entire country.

Rawlings added that the same educator said of racial discrimination, "When you play a piano, isn't it true that when the white and black keys are played in harmony, beautiful music is created?" Mr. Ikeda agreed, adding that he feels the same principle applies to the battle of the sexes.

Mrs. Rawlings said that to improve the situation of women, it is necessary to place importance on education from childhood. If a child is brought up with the traditional notion that a women's place is in the home, it will be very difficult to change that attitude after he or she becomes an adult. There is a need to institute education that will establish new ways of thinking from an early age, she stressed.

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