

SGI President Meets With Former U.N. Leader
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SGI President Ikeda and former U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, meeting at the Seikyo Shimbun Building today, discussed the outlook for the 21st century in light of two conflicting currents: the trend toward globalization and the rise of a new isolationism. Dr. Boutros-Ghali emphasized the importance of recognizing the connection between oneself and global issues, while the SGI leader stressed the crucial role that education can play in raising people's awareness.

Dr. Boutros-Ghali, who completed his term as the sixth U.N. secretary-general in 1996, currently serves as the first secretary-general of La Francophonie, an organization made up of 52 French-speaking countries.

During their talk, President Ikeda expressed wholehearted agreement with comments made by Dr. Boutros-Ghali when he was interviewed on Japanese television last year. At that time he asserted that perseverance, patience and time are the three necessary ingredients for resolving international conflicts.

The SGI leader recalled that, when they first met five years ago, Dr. Boutros-Ghali said that in his youth he was fond of reading the histories of Napoleon and Alexander the Great. Alexander once said that to do good for others and yet be vilified is common to kings, Mr. Ikeda said. Napoleon once proclaimed that historical facts speak out, burning as bright as the sun. Mr. Ikeda said he believed that Dr. Boutros-Ghali's achievements would shine brilliantly in the future.

President Ikeda then paid tribute to Dr. Boutros-Ghali's work during his tenure as secretary-general to realize peace amid the international conflicts that arose in the aftermath of the Cold War. He cited the former U.N. leader's advocacy of "preventative diplomacy"; his efforts to challenge bureaucracy and to streamline the organization by reducing the number of high official posts; and his proposal to strengthen the international body's role and activities in the areas of development, human rights and the environment. The SGI leader further hailed his guest for working steadily to forge a path for humankind, undeterred by praise or criticism.

Thanking the SGI leader, Dr. Boutros-Ghali turned to the role democracy will play in the future. He commented that while there are many books and publications on the topic of democracy, they tend to focus only on democracy on a national level, and not among nations. The failure of this approach, he observed, is evident from the fact that we have so far not been able to avoid wars despite the existence of many democratic countries in the world. Asserting that a framework for international democracy must be constructed during the first two or three decades of the next century, the former secretary-general said that such a framework must stem from the citizens of the world, otherwise it will become hierarchical and undemocratic. President Ikeda concurred with his guest, affirming that to establish true democracy on an international level, we must change the continuing trend of nations to forcefully and undemocratically impose their policies upon others.

The SGI leader emphasized that in all areas, whether politics, economics or peace, there is nothing more valuable than education and that the utmost energy ought to be poured into that endeavor. He noted that Dr. Boutros-Ghali has urged young people to take an interest in world affairs and to strive to accomplish a great goal while deepening friendship with one another as members of the same global family.

Dr. Boutros-Ghali asserted that, as problems facing the world become increasingly global in nature, the ability of a single nation to tackle such issues as the environment, the

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economy or public health, is waning. He predicted that in the 21st century domestic issues will prove intractable unless they are taken up on the international level, and for that reason it is vital that people become concerned with not only their respective countries but with the global situation as a whole. Despite this fact, Dr. Boutros-Ghali said, we see a growing trend among people to withdraw into familiar territory out of fear, further separating themselves from people of other nations.

This tendency toward isolationism, or secessionism, President Ikeda said, is also a deep concern of his, and he asserted that the advance of humanity must keep apace with the changing times. That is why education is vital, he affirmed.

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