

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S HAP CONFERENCE MESSAGE THE SOLUTION IS INNER CHANGE

In his message to the HAP Conference, SGI President Ikeda says that 'inner, personal transformation, in the depths of the lives of individual human beings, holds the key to realizing lasting, sustainable resolutions to the problems that we face.'

I take this occasion to express my heartfelt respect, greetings and solidarity of purpose with the distinguished participants in the Hague Appeal for Peace. I also wish to express my sincere appreciation to all those whose efforts and support have made this important gathering a reality.

When we reflect on the lessons of the 20th century, stained by a history of bloodshed and human suffering, it is clear that this conference, with its goal of creating the foundations of peace for the coming millennium, will be met with the praise and approbation of future generations. And there is inestimable value in that this a gathering not of governments but of citizens motivated by a sense of responsibility for the future.

I have long felt the need for an assembly of the world's peoples and have urged that this be realized in discussions with the citizens, intellectual and political leaders of each country. The 12 million SGI members active in 128 countries and regions around the world have been striving to contribute to the welfare of humankind, creating a people's network active in the fields of peace, culture, humanitarian interests, human rights and environmental protection.

Next year will mark the 25th anniversary of the SGI's establishment. It will also mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Josei Toda, second Soka Gakkai president and an early advocate of nuclear abolition. In a declaration issued in 1957, he described these weapons, unspeakable cruelty and unspeakable evil, an embodiment of the darkest realms of the human heart.

Next year, the Millennium NGO Forum will be held in spring and the Millennium Assembly in September. The present conference, and those that will follow next year, are certain to create a dramatic, unprecedented new current for peace and humanity — values sought and desired by all people everywhere.

The ultimate objective of the SGI's movement is to strengthen and expand this current of peace and humanity without cease. As early as 1903, the founding president of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, called for a new form of what he termed *humanitarian competition* to supplant military, political and economic rivalries. I feel that the HAP represents a concrete endeavor to realize this same ideal through the efforts of the world's citizens.

The core strands of the HAP, of course, are: conflict prevention, resolution and transformation; disarmament and human security; international humanitarian and human rights law and institutions; root causes of war and a culture of peace. Each of these represents an area of urgent global concern.

In our efforts to resolve these challenges, I feel it vital to never lose sight of the importance of transforming the inner lives of individuals. Without this inner transformation, external reforms will result in at best a temporary solution and will not prevent the reemergence of the underlying problem. I believe that this is one of the most important lessons that we can learn from the history of the 20th century.

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In connection with this, it must be acknowledged that humankind's devoted efforts to reform and restructure the systems and institutions of society and the state have done little toward enhancing the human condition, toward truly increasing and deepening human happiness. It is for this reason that I emphasize that inner, personal transformation, in the depths of the lives of individual human beings, holds the key to realizing lasting, sustainable resolutions to the problems that we face.

The kind of personal transformation that most directly contributes to the creation of a culture of peace is one that fosters the spirit of active non-violence. The concrete manifestation of this spirit is to be found in the courage to carry out dialogue — and never retreating from the challenges it presents.

Civilizations do not, by their nature, conflict or clash. Mistrust and conflict arise when we fail in the effort of dialogue, when we accept the mistaken belief that cultural differences present an insurmountable obstacle to communication. This applies equally to all human interactions, across whatever differences appear to separate us. In the coming millennium, dialogue and open interaction among the world's peoples must form the basis for the ethic of a global society.

The outlines of this ethic can be expressed, I believe, by this simple admonition: to reject the temptation to create one's happiness at the expense of others' sufferings. To live this ethic, we must develop a greater empathy for the actual experiences of others.

This again is something that we can only develop through interactions and exchanges with others — through dialogue. This ethic of human solidarity and empathy will serve as the foundation for strengthening the practice of international humanitarian law and the other structures of global non-violent order.

The participants in this conference represent the conscience of humanity at the 20th century's end. I close with my heartfelt prayers for the excellent health and well-being of all the conference participants and for the great success of the campaign to actualize the vision to which it has given birth.

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