



## SGI Peace News

Newsletter introducing Soka Gakkai International (SGI)'s activities to promote a culture of peace

January, 2017 (Vol. 15)

### [“Universal Respect for Human Dignity: The Great Path to Peace,” by Daisaku Ikeda](#)

Tokyo, Japan, January 26, 2017

Daisaku Ikeda, President of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) issued his 35th annual peace proposal titled “The Global Solidarity of Youth: Ushering in a New Era of Hope” on January 26, 2017.



While acknowledging numerous global challenges from armed conflict to the refugee crisis, Ikeda rejects pessimism, citing his faith in young people who embody hope and can catalyze chain reactions of positive change in their communities. He states: “Young people and their energetic engagement represent the solution to the global challenges we face.”

He also sees youth as the key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations toward 2030. He emphasizes that globally shared action, as seen in recent efforts to fight climate change, is essential in promoting these goals.

Ikeda expresses concern about divisive rhetoric and the growth of hate speech, commenting that xenophobic thinking is propelled by a stark division of the world into good and evil. He echoes former German President Richard von Weizsacker, who described the Berlin Wall as “the politics that deny humanity made into stone,” and stresses that we must never allow this kind of division to occur again. [...and more](#)

The full proposal in English will be available on February 16.

### [“Empathy key to human rights” by Daisaku Ikeda](#)

The Japan Times, December 6, 2016

“The heart of all discussions of human rights is the battle against discrimination. All human beings are equal. No discrimination is permissible. Absolutely none.”

The Japan Times

As we commemorate Human Rights Day — the anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on Dec. 10, 1948 — I recall these words of my friend the Brazilian philosopher Austregesilo de Athayde, one of the key members of the drafting committee.

While we may be adept at understanding the feelings of those with whom we have a close relationship, geographical and cultural distances often result in a corresponding psychological distancing. People end up avoiding interaction with those who are different, instead viewing individuals and groups through the lens of stereotypes; and modern means of communication can be used to amplify and spread the impulse to stereotyping and hatred...[and more](#)

### **7<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Human Rights Education “Addressing the Challenges of Civil Society”**

Santiago, Chile, December 12-15, 2016

On December 12-15, 2016, the SGI participated in the 7th International Human Rights Education Conference (IHREC) “Addressing the Challenges of Civil Society” organized by the Centre for Human Rights, Faculty of Law of the University of Chile, in Santiago, Chile.



On the 14<sup>th</sup>, as part of the session entitled “Human Rights in Professional Training,” Sneha Aurora, SGI’s Senior Adviser on human rights education, delivered a presentation on behalf of the HRE 2020. The HRE 2020, of which the SGI is one of the original members, is a Global Civil Society Coalition for Human Rights Education that is comprised of a diverse group of civil society organizations from all regions.

Ms. Aurora gave a talk on the theme of “Advancing the Right to Human Rights Education through International Advocacy.” She highlighted policy, practice and recent developments at the international level, which promote the right to human rights education, leading to strengthening and implementing commitments on human rights education and training at national level. She concluded by presenting current international developments, including Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 which encourages states to implement the right to a quality education.

### **High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges**

Geneva, Switzerland, December 8-9, 2016

On December 8-9, 2016, the SGI was invited to attend the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges which took place at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.



Around 677 participants attended the event, including refugees’ youth delegates, governments, international organizations, civil society’s representatives, private foundations and other key humanitarian actors.

The theme of the year, “Children on the move,” focused on the challenges that

children and young people face in escaping violence and war to seek refuge and safety in other countries and looked at initiatives and practical solutions to tackle this issue.

Filippo Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, emphasized that more than half of all refugees are children, many of whom are unaccompanied or separated minors at high risk of exploitation.

Among others, sustained access to education for children in emergencies was identified as a key priority to ensure these children a different future. Education is “not just a right, but it is a powerful protection’s measure.”

### **The Symposium on Religion in Humanitarian Action at Harvard**

Boston, USA, January 19-20, 2017

What knowledge and assumptions about religion do faith-based and secular international humanitarian agencies make? How do these assumptions impact their work?



The issues were explored at the Symposium on Religion in Humanitarian Action, which was held in Andover Hall of the Harvard Divinity School (HDS) on January 19-20, sponsored by the Religious Literacy Project at HDS in collaboration with Boston University. The SGI was invited to the symposium as well as Dr. Azza Karam, Chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Organizations for Development, other humanitarian practitioners and leading scholars.

Nobuyuki Asai, SGI’s Program Coordinator of Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Affairs, made a presentation in the panel entitled “Cyclone Nargis: The Humanitarian Crisis of a Natural Disaster.” He pointed out that people amidst a crisis can be inspired to initiate actions for recovery even in a depressed situation by encouragement through faith. In reference to “local humanitarian leadership,” which was one of the main topics of the symposium, he emphasized that such encouragement can promote leadership by numerous people within their own capacity.

### **International Conference in Nagasaki – towards a world free of nuclear weapons**

Nagasaki, Japan, December 11-13, 2016

The 26<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues was held in Nagasaki from December 11 to 13, co-organized by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific and the Government of Japan. The conference, attended by over 50 representatives of governmental and inter-



governmental organizations, academic institutions and nongovernmental organizations from around 20 countries, aimed at exchanging views on current challenges to disarmament and potential solutions to them as well as discussing ways to realize a world free of nuclear weapons. Kimiaki Kawai, Director of Soka Gakkai Peace Committee, participated in the discussion during the conference.

At a forum of Youth Communicator for a World without Nuclear Weapons on December 11 as part of the three-day conference, Youth Communicators made presentations on their activities in order to pass on the realities of the use of nuclear weapons to the international community as well as to future generations, the [“Statement and Recommendation by Youth towards a World without Nuclear Weapons”](#) was issued as the outcome document.

### [The 2016 Annual Report on SGI’s Peace Activities will soon be available online](#)

January 26, 2017

The 2016 Annual Report on SGI’s Peace Activities will soon be available online [here](#).



***This bimonthly SGI Peace News provides recent updates on SGI’s public educational activities to help raise awareness on issues such as nuclear disarmament, human rights, sustainable development, interfaith cooperation and humanitarian assistance.***

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