

## SYNOPSIS: 1998 PEACE PROPOSAL

ON January 26, in commemoration of the twenty-third anniversary of the SGI's founding, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda issued his 1998 peace proposal, entitled "Humanity and the New Millennium: From Chaos to Cosmos." In this year's proposal, Ikeda addresses the question of how to make the transition from a century of darkness, despair and killing to an era of brilliance, hope and coexistence:

He first asserts that in order to make this change, it is necessary to view history on a larger scale and from the perspective of a wider span of time. He introduces the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdjaev's concept of "existential time," defined as "supertemporal time" or "time eternally in the present," as in essence the very force that makes history. This idea of time, which does not conform to any mathematical calculation and is only measured by the intensity of joy or suffering experienced at a given moment, has much in common with the Buddhist principle of the simultaneity of cause and effect, which expounds that future outcomes are contained in the intensity of a single moment of life. He acknowledges the great vision and conviction of Nichiren, the thirteenth-century Japanese Buddhist sage whose teachings inspire SGI members and whose compassion for humanity extended 10,000 years and more into the future.

Arnold J. Toynbee also held a similar view of history, Mr. Ikeda states, introducing the British historian's belief that it is the deep, slow undercurrents of history that ultimately create the future. In his 1947 essay "Civilization on Trial," Toynbee looks three millennia ahead and forecasts the inevitability of the social integration of humanity and the decisive role of religion in that process. Mr. Ikeda observes that such a far-reaching perspective on the history of humankind is indispensable to any world religion worthy of the name today. He further urges that amid the rapidly changing realms of politics, economics, science and military affairs, we must move forward unperturbed, with courage and conviction, our sights set on goals a thousand, two thousand years into the future.

Addressing the current problems of global warming and environmental degradation, Mr. Ikeda maintains that these issues compel us to view ourselves as neighbors in a world community, sharing a common future that transcends national and ethnic boundaries and, in this way, to confront the challenge of globalization. He affirms that the ideal multicultural society is to be found not in a "universal world order" based on certain specific values, nor in a "mosaic world order" of cultures in conflict, but in a "constellation" of cultures brilliant in their diversity—a global civilization characterized by tolerance and coexistence. To that end, Mr. Ikeda states, it is crucial to identify the common values and principles that lie at the foundation of all cultures.

He points out that, in the 1903 treatise *Jinsei Chirigaku* (The Geography of Human Life), Soka Gakkai founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi asserts it is time for the world to shift its energies from military, political and economic competition to

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“humanitarian competition.” In order to do so, in Makiguchi’s view, we must work for the welfare of others, for “by benefiting others, we benefit ourselves.” This is an amplification of the spirit of “to live and let live” advocated by Toynbee, which the late historian stressed as vital to the survival of humankind in this age when peoples with diverse traditions, faiths and ideals live as neighbors. Mr. Ikeda contends that a shift to humanitarianism which transcends national boundaries will be critical in the globalization of the twenty-first century.

To encourage this shift, he proposes that the annual summits of industrial powers further expand to include China and India. He reasons that the population of these two nations together is expected to reach one-third of the entire population of the world in the near future, and indicates that both China and India have been societies of great ethnic diversity throughout their long histories. Expressing concern that unless the world’s major countries start thinking not only of their own interests but of the well-being of humanity as a whole, global issues will never be resolved, Mr. Ikeda recommends that the summit be reorganized as a “Summit of Responsible Countries,” where leaders can freely discuss common issues and where they must share responsibility for the future of humanity.

As we move closer to the construction of a global community, it is vital, he states, to build a society that respects what Toynbee termed “unity in diversity and diversity in unity.” A “world of diversity” was also called for by former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, and the late Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi emphasized, too, that the achievement of various cultures living together harmoniously in his country was the greatest gift India could give to the world. Drawing a parallel with the Buddhist image of cherry, plum and pear, an illustration of diversity that asserts that all living things possess their own unique characteristics, Mr. Ikeda stresses that in order to realize true diversity, we must create a world in which people respect and appreciate each other’s differences. Education is the key to achieving such harmony, he holds, stating that a “culture of peace” can be realized by overcoming what second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda called “narrow nationalism and self-centeredness,” and through each person changing on a fundamental level, achieving their individual “human revolution.”

Noting that this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948, Mr. Ikeda acknowledges that the thirty-article document has set a global standard for human rights in international society and been the source of numerous human rights agreements and declarations. It is now time, he declares, to move beyond the stage of setting standards and on to the stage of implementation, for the fact remains that persecution and human tragedy continue to persist in many parts of the world. Deploring this state of affairs, he proposes the creation of a network of national human rights agencies that would strive to protect human rights in each country. He envisages these independent agencies working in cooperation with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and U.N. agencies toward fulfilling the standards set forth in human rights treaties. Mr. Ikeda also suggests that the training programs implemented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for

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Human Rights be fully utilized to promote active exchange among people and organizations promoting human rights, deepening their understanding of U.N. ideals and those enshrined in the Universal Declaration.

In addition to setting up a viable organizational framework, Mr. Ikeda adds, it is also necessary to establish a human rights culture—to cultivate among people an awareness that human rights are the norm, not something out of the ordinary. The SGI has actively endeavored over the years to pursue this ideal, he explains, based on the Buddhist concept of the bodhisattva way of life, in which one is motivated by a compassionate desire to see others attain true happiness and fulfillment. Mr. Ikeda maintains that societal norms detached from self-generated values are fragile, stating that only by inspiring within the individual the fervent wish to see others leading genuinely humane lives and the courage to take compassionate action, can human rights find footing in society and be enjoyed by people the world over.

Observing that this year marks the 350th anniversary of the signing of the Westphalia Treaty that brought to an end the Thirty Years' Wars (1618–48) and laid the foundation for the contemporary international political order centered on nation-states, Mr. Ikeda notes that it has become evident that such a framework alone is inadequate to cope with global problems. Stating his support for current moves toward the establishment of an international criminal court, he urges that a new setting must be enacted whereby world issues are tackled on an international level, disseminating the power held by the nation-state and giving rise to an age where the role and responsibility of the individual as a member of the global family takes center stage. This new era, he contends, will only be realized with the support, wisdom and strength of the people themselves, and as represented by NGOs.

Confirming that NGO campaigns, such as the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), were crucial in the adoption in September 1997 of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, Mr. Ikeda proposes that the next step should be, once again through popular initiatives, to reduce the ever-increasing number of small arms, such as automatic rifles and small-caliber guns, that exacerbate regional and civil conflicts in the post-Cold War world. He also stresses the need for the adoption of a treaty demanding a total ban on nuclear weapons as early as possible and mentions the Abolition 2000 campaign currently under way, which is aimed at establishing such an agreement by the start of the new millennium. This movement is actively supported by the SGI, and he calls on all the nuclear weapon states to join in a commitment to end the era of nuclear arms by the year 2000.

During the three remaining years of the twentieth century, as we stand facing the threshold of the third millennium, we must do everything in our power to create a new global civilization of the people, by the people and for the people. Mr. Ikeda appeals for concrete steps to be taken toward creating a forum that will link NGOs with the General Assembly of the United Nations and welcomes the World NGO Conference and the Third Hague Peace Conference already slated for 1999. He proposes that a World Without War Declaration be adopted at the Hague

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Conference and further states his support for the People's Millennium Assembly, to be attended by representatives of NGOs and other citizens' groups and held in conjunction with the Millennium Assembly scheduled to take place at the United Nations in the year 2000. □

In conclusion, Ikeda urges that we stand firm in our resolve to create a new millennium free from the threat of nuclear arms and war in which respect for the dignity of life abounds, with the firm conviction that building an age of hope, rich in diversity, depends on us. He ends with the hope that future historians will look back at the end of the twentieth century as a critical time in the history of the world, when the first foundations of a truly global civilization were laid.

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