

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETS IN SANTA MONICA

The inaugural session of approximately 50 zone leaders and national leaders who comprise SGI-USA's Central Executive Committee convened at the SGI-USA Visitors Center in Santa Monica March 26–28. At the last CEC gathering in December 1998, a new zone system had been announced — zone leaders function to assist the national leadership in communicating to and supporting the regional organizations and their membership.

During the nationwide teleconference held Sunday morning, General Director Fred Zaitso expressed his deep concern about the war in Yugoslavia. He said: "I sincerely pray for a quick resolution of the conflict and for peace. This also convinced me of the great value of our SGI peace movement."

Representatives from the eight zones reviewed the organization's quarterly plan for 1999, which was adopted at the last CEC gathering, and through intense brainstorming, reaffirmed the second quarter's goal — commemorative contributions — which will begin on April 28 and continue through June 6. Thorough dialogue in each region is encouraged so that every person can have a shared understanding and sense of purpose regarding commemorative contributions.

The subject of propagation, which was the first quarter's goal, arose repeatedly throughout the conference. Suggestions from the membership on improving the organization were also discussed in depth. It was affirmed that strong prayer, educating ourselves and one another to deepen our understanding of Buddhism, and taking action are the basis of a long-range view in dealing with the temple issue.

The youth reported that the March 16 meetings were a great success, and the young men and young women will be conducting their respective general meetings in July. The youth conferences scheduled at the Florida Nature and Culture Center this summer were cancelled to focus on the 1st SGI-USA Youth Grand Culture Festival to be held this fall in Los Angeles. It will be the first culture festival with nationwide participation since the January 1995 World Peace Youth Culture Festival in Hawaii.

Efforts are being made throughout the country to help new members and interested parties prepare for the Entrance Exam, which will take place April 25.

During the teleconference, SGI-USA Women's Leader Wendy Clark reported that more than 32,000 people, including 4,600 guests, took part in the uniquely creative and successful February women's commemorative meetings; this far exceeded last year's attendance of some 24,000.

The Publication Center reported that many compelling books will become available this year in the SGI-USA bookstores. Attention was also brought to the *World Tribune* Readers Survey published in the March 26 *World Tribune* in the hopes that many will offer their feedback.

— MARGIE HALL