

**HIGHLIGHTS OF SPEECHES GIVEN AT THE YEAR-END REGION LEADERS
MEETING, DEC. 5
TAKE ACTION TOGETHER IN THE DISTRICT**

**EIICHI WADA
SGI GENERAL DIRECTOR**

The CEC and Regional Leaders meetings that we have conducted today have deep significance for American kosen-rufu. In that sense, this is truly a commemorative day. I congratulate all of you and ask you to advance with a fresh new determination, centering on newly appointed General Director Danny Nagashima and Women's Division Leader Matilda Buck. I hope you will continue to advance cheerfully, in beautiful harmony.

In advancing toward the future, I hope that you will continue to further strengthen and solidify your unity. I also hope that you will create a wonderful organization in which all the members can feel a sense of joy and conviction in practicing this Buddhism; also, that the members can feel immense joy in being able to advance with SGI President Ikeda.

In the recent *New Human Revolution* chapter, "The Breeze of Happiness," President Ikeda shares an account of a commemorative photo session with a group of leaders in Kansai, Japan, years ago. He writes: "Kosen-rufu is a sacred path that can be realized only when all the members stand up with the spirit of a light. Therefore, Shin'ichi was resolutely determined that he would plant in each member's heart the eternal light of promise, the eternal light of joy and the eternal light of courage. Sparks generated by striking stones give rise to light. Likewise the light of kosen-rufu will manifest only through the interaction between the human-to-human spirit. Shin'ichi completely understood this fact."

I hope that each and every one of you, as leaders, will become such spark-producing "stones" and truly interact heart to heart with the members on the forefront of our activities. When you do so, I am confident that you will spark an eternal flame of promise in the hearts of the members, an eternal light of joy and courage.

Looking back on the history of kosen-rufu, President Ikeda performed this function as he continued to interact with the members and ignite this light in their hearts. This has been the splendid history of kosen-rufu to this day. I am confident that this example will serve as an eternal guideline for kosen-rufu from today onward.

Based on this, I would like to make a proposal to you today. We are actually already doing this in Japan. I propose that all of you leaders who are gathered here today be responsible for a district.

The district is at the front line of our organization and is indeed a harbor of faith and encouragement where the members feel reassured. Once you are assigned to a district, you should not give guidance to its members. Rather, I would like you to first take action together with the district leaders, the women's district leaders and the youth division district leaders. You might, for example, set July as your first target and take action together with the district leaders so that you can truly contribute to the improvement and betterment of the district.

Please continue to unite with these leaders and introduce others to this Buddhism, promote the *World Tribune* and conduct home visits to encourage the members in the district. In this way, I hope that like stones rubbing together, you and the members will really produce sparks that ignite the light of joy and courage in the hearts of each and every member. I would like all of you to be the first to take such action.

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Of course, depending on your responsibilities and schedules, I know there will be limitations on how much you can become engaged in the district. I would like you to participate in the district planning meeting, the discussion meeting and home visits. I would like you to support these three pillars. Of course, we are talking about the district, so the central figure is the district leader. And of course you should ask the district leader to lead gongyo. The central figure of the discussion meeting will be the district leader. At the beginning, even if you ask them to lead gongyo or be the center, they may hesitate if you, their senior, are there. But please reassure them by saying: "You are the district leader, so please lead."

Ultimately, the district is at the forefront of the organization. As leaders, you get information and give direction at headquarters- or chapter-level meetings. But if you don't go to the front lines, you won't know how the information is flowing at the district level, how things are communicated.

Maybe at the end of the meeting, for example, when you have to give words of encouragement to the members of the district, always have the *World Tribune* with you. I'm sure you are busy throughout the day and don't have time to think of what kind of encouragement you can give later that day. So please take the *World Tribune* with you and share something from President Ikeda's speech or Nichiren Daishonin's Writings.

Based on President Ikeda's guidance and speeches, please share your own experience with the members or the wonderful experiences of others you have heard that you think will inspire them. If you share these things, the members will be able to stand up with fresh determination.

On Nov. 21, when I was in Japan, I had the opportunity to meet with President Ikeda. I would like to share some of his comments from that time: "Your fortune increases according to your spirit. In other words, your determination to do something for kosen-rufu or to take action for kosen-rufu brings about fortune. This has nothing to do with organizational positions. It's important to make a determination to promote the *World Tribune* and make a determination to really think how you can create a successful, joyful discussion meeting, where members will be filled with joy. At least make a determination to invite one guest to a meeting. Or make a determination to reach out to a temple member so that they can witness the truth. Go out to the people, the members. Let us chant daimoku together. This heart, this spirit, is important. When we have this spirit, this determination, we are able to increase our fortune."

He went on to say: "Those who look down on people or who simply observe them, will unknowingly see their life force weaken and lose their sense of joy. In other words, if there are members who are really determined to work for kosen-rufu and if you are looking down on them or just listening to what they are saying without the spirit to help, gradually you will lose life force and joy.

"No matter how much wealth or status we may have, if we lose joy we will not truly be happy. It is when we rack our brains and struggle and exert ourselves for kosen-rufu that we are able to establish an unsurpassed life-condition in which we experience immense joy, both in life and in death.

"As we struggle for the sake of the happiness of the members, for the happiness and development of the district, and take action — when we have a sense of purpose to advance kosen-rufu — then all our struggles will change into a sense of joy and benefit."

I understand that we have more than 180 leaders gathered in this room today. I hope that

each of you will leap into the district and take action to really share President Ikeda's vision and dreams for kosen-rufu with the members, creating a grand tide of kosen-rufu. I hope that today you will make that solid determination.

As you know, when Soka University of America Aliso Viejo, opens on May 3, 2001, President Ikeda has said that he will take leadership for worldwide kosen-rufu in America. I hope that you will be in complete rhythm with his determination and heart and unite together to create a great SGI-USA.

Lastly, I would like to convey to you President Ikeda's message. He says thank you very much for your sincere efforts—in spite of it being the weekend—for the sake of the development of SGI-USA and its members. He suggests we have dinner in the hotel tonight as his and Mrs. Ikeda's guests. Please enjoy your dinner.

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