

**SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO THE 1ST PACIFIC ISLANDS
NEW MILLENNIUM PEACE CONFERENCE
THE PATH TO PEACE BEGINS WITHIN**

'The path and process toward the highest of human ends must begin within, in the hearts and minds of individuals,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'For it is in the innermost depths of our lives that we must build the citadel of peace and compassion, whose ramparts can never be breached.'

My deepest congratulations on the holding of this remarkable event, organized under the auspices of the University of Guam, Soka University of America and the SGI-USA!

I want to express my heartfelt appreciation and respect to those whose invaluable support was so generously rendered in making this conference a reality, including Dr. David Shimizu, chairman of the Board of Regents at the University of Guam, Dr. Jose Nededog, president of the university, and the Honorable Carl Gutierrez, governor of Guam, along with many government officials and professors of the university.

It is with profound gratitude that I welcome the participants who have traveled such long distances to join this momentous occasion. Today, we have the great honor in welcoming guests from Kosrae, Chuuk, Yap, Pohnpei of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the Republic of Palau and the Kingdom of Tonga.

The Pacific Islands are blessed with eternal summers, with coral reefs sparkling in emerald waters. Yet these blissful islands became the scene of savage battles where hundreds of thousands of precious lives were to tragically perish, as the world was engulfed in war.

Guam suffered some of the worst bloodshed. As such, it is particularly meaningful that this conference should take place here, at the dawn of a new millennium.

For the same reason, we were compelled to choose Guam 25 years ago as the venue for our World Peace Conference that inaugurated the SGI on Jan. 26, 1975. Nowhere would it be more appropriate to renew our quest for peace, nowhere more befitting to herald its import to the world, than the Pacific Islands.

Would it be an exaggeration, then, to call the islands our starting point for global peace? I think not.

In a speech I gave at the 1975 conference, I made the following entreaty to my fellow SGI members: Do not fritter your cherished lives away solely to see your own happiness flower, but dedicate yourself to sow the seeds of peace throughout the world.

And I expressed my determination to do the same.

At that gathering, the 158 members representing the SGI organizations of 51 countries pledged their commitment to this cause, to promote peace in their families, workplaces, communities and countries. The ideals they sowed have since begun to sprout and blossom, their roots reaching out and linking up with one another to form a global network of peace that now embraces 148 countries.

Nothing exemplifies our movement more than the spirit and life of Soka Gakkai founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and his successor and Soka Gakkai co-founder, Josei Toda. During World War II, these two were arrested and imprisoned by Japan's militarist regime for their rejection of State Shinto and their adamant opposition

to war. Makiguchi, who would not compromise his convictions, died in prison.

Toda, who also refused to abandon his beliefs, was released just prior to the war's end and devoted his life to rebuilding a movement shattered by government oppression. In September 1957, he issued a declaration before 50,000 young men and women calling for the total abolishment of nuclear weapons — a call that not only ignited the young people's passion and imagination but remains central to the SGI's quest for and commitment to world peace today.

Makiguchi's and Toda's stand against war was inspired by the fundamental spirit of Buddhism, which places boundless respect on the sanctity and equality of all human beings. This is the core message of Shakyamuni, who founded Buddhism in India 2,800 years ago. He taught that the people need only to "kill the will to kill," a timeless message against acts of violence, an ageless admonition that people—and all living things—must depend on one another for sustenance. This serves as an overarching principle to guide the SGI in its manifold activities for peace.

Any effort seeking non-violent means to achieve peace obviously faces a daunting task. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "Non-violence requires more than the courage of the soldier of war." As difficult as it may be, the path and process toward the highest of human ends must begin within, in the hearts and minds of individuals.

For it is in the innermost depths of our lives that we must build the citadel of peace and compassion, whose ramparts can never be breached. Unless it is built, unless we turn inward for the resolution to conflict and division, peace will never be genuine or lasting.

For more than 30 years, this is what I have declared to be the foremost challenge—and imperative—of our times: to make the 21st century into a Century of Life, to make it one that upholds the sanctity of all living things.

It is an august, arduous task, which I entrust most of all to the young people, who shoulder the responsibility for the future. We have little choice but to urge them on, for only they can lead us into a Century of Life, a Century of Peace.

My fervent wish is that this conference will prove to be the first among many remarkable steps to bring about a world free from war. I conclude my message with heartfelt prayers for peace, prosperity and continued good health among all the peoples of the Pacific Islands.

Jan. 21, 2000

Daisaku Ikeda

President

Soka Gakkai International