

**SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO THE AFRICAN ARTS AND
CULTURE FESTIVAL
AFRICA: CONTINENT OF HOPE**

'Africa is the birthplace of humanity; it is a great source of energy for art and culture,' writes SGI President Ikeda. 'Let us celebrate the magnificent mission of those who have their roots in Africa.'

My heartfelt congratulations on your historic Southern California Zone African Arts and Culture Festival! Africa is the birthplace of humanity; it is a great source of energy for art and culture. Let us celebrate the magnificent mission of those who have their roots in Africa—the Continent of Hope!

Nichiren Daishonin writes, "If a person cannot manage to cross a moat ten feet wide, how can he cross one that is a hundred or two hundred feet?" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 766). The true path of Buddhism must be traveled one step at a time. You are tenaciously challenging what lies before you. Out of such noble efforts will unfold the future spread of Buddhism. No matter what may happen, please continue to climb mountains and cross valleys toward your victory. Challenging yourself repeatedly in your immediate circumstances will eventually lead to the great, victorious blossoming of your life.

I ask that each of you—through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with a firm, brilliant resolve—live in the present moment, a way of life that can only be described as "the greatest of all joys" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 788). Please become exemplary citizens and further expand the network of understanding and appreciation for Buddhism in your community and throughout society.

I am praying for the longevity, happiness and prosperity of you and your families, whom I deeply cherish.

*May 20, 2001
Daisaku Ikeda*