Inner Transformation: Creating a Global Groundswell for Peace

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Commemorating the twenty-ninth anniversary of the founding of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), I would like to take this opportunity to offer some perspectives and proposals that might further the search for global peace.

In the opening years of the twenty-first century, international society has been convulsed by the emergence of new threats and by divisive debate over how best to respond to them. Since the September 11, 2001, terror attacks in the United States, there has been an ongoing incidence of indiscriminate violence, which has devastated the lives of large numbers of ordinary citizens around the world. At the same time, there is growing anxiety over the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and other weapons of mass destruction.

The issue of inspections to determine the extent, if any, of Iraq's possession of such weapons was a major focus of global concern and controversy last year. In March, with world opinion divided over the rights and wrongs of the use of force against Iraq, whose government had for twelve years failed to implement in good faith the numerous resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, the United States and the United Kingdom made the decision to launch a military invasion. The overwhelming superiority of the coalition forces brought about the collapse of the Hussein regime after only twenty-one days of formal engagement. Since then, however, the United States and allied forces occupying and administering Iraq have come under constant attack, as have the offices of the United Nations. This has raised doubts about the prospects for rebuilding Iraq and bringing stability to the Middle East.

A similar state of disorder is evident in Afghanistan, which was the scene of military action designed to extirpate the Al Qaeda terror organization. While a constitution was finally adopted in January of this year, attacks from what are thought to be the remnants of the Taliban regime persist, and there is danger that the security situation will further deteriorate.

The international community cannot and must not turn a blind eye to these new threats. Although it must demonstrate a firm resolve, recent events make it evident that an exclusive reliance on military force will not bring about a fundamental solution.

In addition to the challenges of reconstructing Iraq and Afghanistan, the question of peace between the Israelis and Palestinians remains a paramount concern, as does that of North Korea's nuclear weapons development program. The outlook for all of these issues is clouded in uncertainty.

Parallel with the concrete threat of war and conflict, we need to focus on the equally critical issue of the impact this state of

affairs is having on the hearts and minds of people worldwide. The signal failure of military action to produce a clear prospect for peace has left many people with suffocating feelings of powerlessness and dread.

It may sometimes be possible to break an impasse through the use of military force or other forms of "hard power." At best, however, such action can only respond to the symptoms of conflict; to the degree it plants further seeds of hatred in regions already torn by strife, it can deepen and entrench antagonisms. This is a concern I share with many people of conscience and indeed, this dire possibility is becoming manifest in many places around the globe. It is for this reason that in my last two proposals I have stressed the need for a spirit of self-mastery and restraint on the part of those who possess and wield the tools of hard power. This is essential if the exercise of such power is to bring about any result other than to deepen the cycles of hatred and revenge. At the same time, I have urged a united response by the international community--one that centrally includes the use of soft power.

No efforts will gain the wholehearted support of people or succeed in bringing about lasting stability and peace without a spirit of self-mastery based on an acute awareness of the humanity of others--something that I consider to be the very essence of civilization.

The sharp divisions that opened up in the international community regarding the legitimacy of military operations against Iraq have yet to heal. It is vital that all parties reflect on their failings in the recent past and find a renewed commitment to constructive dialogue. All should join in the search for the kind of approach that will constitute not symptomatic treatment but fundamental cure.

What must be done to forestall the risk, inherent in the essential asymmetry of a "war" against terrorism, that it will become a deadly quagmire? Since it is probably unrealistic to expect self-restraint on the part of the terrorists, those who oppose them must put priority on the exercise of self-mastery--a quality that grows from the effort to consider and understand the position of the "other." This effort must take precedence over the use of hard power. Equally essential are the courage and vision to address the underlying conditions of poverty and injustice that are enabling factors in terrorism.

Only in this way can we express genuine proof of civilization. What is needed is not simply to repeat universal principles--that freedom and democracy are the fruits of civilization, for example. Our words need to be grounded in the spirit of self-mastery--the willingness to learn from the example of others and correct our behavior accordingly. They need to embody the kind of soft power that can persuade, "co-opt rather than coerce" in Joseph Nye's phrase (*Paradox* 9). And unless they are put into a concrete form that can be readily appreciated by the world's citizens, the loftiest expressions of ideals will remain void of content, mere empty rhetoric. This is a concern that I simply cannot dismiss.

Here I would like to consider the issue of peace from a perspective somewhat different from that of political or even military responses (my proposals for the past two years attempted to clarify a basic stance toward those questions). Specifically, I

believe there is a kind of progressive "root-rot" eating away at the depths of people's understanding of what it means to be human--how we define ourselves and how we relate to those different from us. In a world trapped in cycles of terrorism and military reprisal, I feel it is vital to put the scalpel to the corrupt roots from which the spiritual malaise of our era stems. Only by mustering the courage to do this will we be able to breathe again the liberating winds of hope.

This is, of course, an issue that has been an integral part of the spiritual history of humanity ever since such great teachers as Shakyamuni and Socrates, whose philosophies of self-reliance and self-knowledge ultimately depend on engagement and dialogue with the other. It is not, however, my intention to examine this in the abstract. Rather, I would like to consider it in terms of an issue that is concrete, close to home and amenable to change through a subtle shift in attitude--namely, the problems facing young people and the role of education.

"Freedom and Discipline"

In this connection, I am reminded of a book I read in my youth. Born in 1928, my early years were shaped by the drama and chaos surrounding Japan's defeat in World War II, which overnight brought a complete overturning of established values. People felt liberated from the long dark wartime era, from the cruel and oppressive tyranny of the military government, from the horrors of war itself. Such words as freedom and democracy, as articulated by the Allied Occupation, shone with a freshness and brilliance unimaginable today.

It was against this background that I read *Jiyu to kiritsu* (Freedom and Discipline) by Kiyoshi Ikeda (1903--1990), at the time professor of English literature at Keio University. In the 1920s, he spent eight years studying at an English public school and at Cambridge University, and another three at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. Based on this experience he came to the conclusion, so compellingly portrayed in this book, that the appreciation of freedom required for a healthy democracy is not possible without strict training and personal development in the critical period of youth that corresponds to the English public school years. Without such an experience of discipline, he maintained, freedom would degenerate into self-indulgent license.

Professor Ikeda's book does not, it should be pointed out, deal with the underside of the political culture that gave birth to parliamentary democracy, notably racial and class prejudice and the exploitation of colonialism. And yet, for people of my generation in postwar Japan, amidst an overwhelming rejection of militarism and fascism--and a daily struggle to secure enough to eat--the words freedom and democracy shone like a star of hope, promising a better, brighter future. I therefore remember Freedom and Discipline as a book that seemed to contain the condensed essence of Anglo-Saxon democracy.

The book recounts the following episode:

I had the chance to speak to a man who specialized in training police dogs for the city of Frankfurt, Germany. It was his policy that if he wasn't feeling well or had some matter that was weighing on his mind, he would cancel the day's training. At times like that, there would be the risk that, during the training session, something could cause him to get angry in earnest. During the process of training, it may be necessary to scold a dog; physical punishment may even be required at times. But if one gives in to real anger even once, that will be the end of any hope of training that dog. This is because the dog will have contempt for the trainer. Even a dog won't accept training from someone for whom he has contempt. (119)

The one being trained is in a sense a mirror in which the one doing the training is reflected, an indispensable partner. Professor Ikeda compared this to the forging and fostering of character through education, going so far as to state, "This was, in nearly three years studying in Germany, the one and only thing I was, with my limited talents, able to learn" (119).

I believe the reason I remember so well this episode from a book read long ago is this: For the trainer, the police dog represents the distinct, undeniable presence of an "other" who does not bend easily to one's will but rather offers resistance; the trainer had learned that when his self-mastery was in doubt, there was a danger he would lose the ability to respect the dog as other, and the dog would in turn respond with contempt.

This truth, which applies even to the attempt to train a police dog, of course pertains with far greater subtlety and depth of meaning in the case of interactions between and among humans. "After teaching for almost twenty years, I find that I have yet to master even this most self-evident principle" (119). Professor Ikeda's words are best read as the honest and frank confession of an excellent educator.

Self requires the existence of other. We cannot engage with others in an effective and productive manner if we lack the inner tension, the will and spiritual energy to guide and control our emotions. It is by recognizing that which is different from and external to ourselves, sensing the resistance it offers, that we are inspired to exercise the self-mastery that brings our humanity to fruition. To lose sight of the other is thus to undermine our full experience of self.

In the absence of "other"

Looking at the conditions surrounding young people in Japan more than half a century after Professor Ikeda wrote Freedom and Discipline, one has to wonder to just what extent his call for a healthy tension in education has been fulfilled. (And here I use education in the broadest sense of the term, not limited to such formal settings as schools but to include the family and society at large.)

In recent years, the behavior of some young people has seemed completely out of sync with conventional understandings

of "common sense" and has become an object of consternation. But the acting out of these young people should be seen as symptomatic of the erosion of the educative function of society as a whole, and of a pervasive loss of the spiritual tautness that is born from the distinct encounter of self and other.

I think the self-destructive behavior of young people can best be understood as a dire warning about the general health of society. Their greater sensitivity renders them more vulnerable to the toxins of modern life, similar to the canaries traditionally placed in coal mines whose distress would indicate the presence of poisonous gases.

At one time it was said that the two defining images of postwar Japan were spoiled children overindulged by their parents and sites of natural beauty despoiled by litter. This sardonic observation captures the flaccid spiritual conditions that have prevailed under postwar democracy, in which people skirt the trials of an open engagement with either the natural world or their fellow humans. As Freedom and Discipline illustrates, character is something that can only be forged within the context of the inner tension provoked by the encounter of self and other, which I would construe to include the natural environment. Japan's increasing prosperity appears to have obscured this.

Prof. Nobuo Masataka of Kyoto University has coined the phrase "at-home-ism" to describe the symptoms of the inability to distinguish between self and other, and by extension between the private and the public realms (*Keitai* 57). This syndrome, sadly common in Japanese young people today, manifests itself as either withdrawal into private space or unselfconscious brazenness in public. If one is satisfied to act at all times and in all places as if "at home," there is little opportunity to learn the minimal sense of etiquette and public-spiritedness that gives concrete shape to self-mastery. Self-mastery is something that can only be attained through a sustained effort of the will.

A flat, featureless society in which we meet no real resistance, in which there is no distinct response from the presence of the other, is one that, while it may appear free, is in fact not. There is something suffocating and claustrophobic about such a society where--as the author and lyricist Yu Aku put it, "whatever we have and however free we are to do as we like, what we are left with amounts to nothing at all" (11). The sense of frustration that lurks constantly in the background of our apparent affluence and freedom signals the spiritual ensnarement of which people are finally beginning to become aware.

A journalist of my acquaintance noted with some surprise that the popular annual guide to new terms and concepts in use in Japanese society, *Imidas*, came this year with a companion volume, "What To Do in Different Situations--Fifty-five Lessons in Manners for Today's World." This comprises step-by-step guidelines for everyday behavior--from the most basic table manners to the proper etiquette for weddings, funerals and other ceremonial occasions. This journalist found it symbolic of the needs of the era that an entire volume should be dedicated to such matters. Most of the knowledge contained in it would, just a few decades ago, have been something one naturally absorbed through interactions in the family or local community, and I agree that it does indeed seem indicative of the state of society that it should require spelling out in such detail.

My reason for examining Japanese social mores is this: I firmly believe that the contradictions and pathology that can be seen there share deep roots with the larger pathology of contemporary civilization--the chain reactions of violence that show no sign of abating. Whether on the micro or the macro level, to lose sight of the other is to become profoundly desensitized to human feeling, and it is this that underlies the apathy and cynicism so prevalent in contemporary society.

As I sought to warn in my proposal of two years ago, there is a profound continuity between the malaise that we see infecting the hearts of so many young people and the cool disengagement of modern, high-tech warfare. In particular, I am concerned about the numbing impact of a kind of conflict in which one side experiences virtually no casualties while the other is devastated to an unknown, yet clearly enormous, extent.

The United States' experiment in bringing freedom and democracy to Iraq is facing severe trials in the form of continuing violence and disruption. One has to wonder how earnestly the question was posed as to what meaning and appeal the "universal principles" of the West would have for people whose ethics and values have grown out of a quite different set of religious principles, in this case Islam. Was there, in other words, a full and respectful cognizance of the Iraqi people as "other"?

This question, so large in its implications, can in fact be tackled in the immediacy of our daily lives. It is here that we can take the first, crucial step. However seemingly small, this step is not a detour but actually advances the grand undertaking of redefining the course and direction of civilization.

First, immediate steps

In March of last year, UN Under-Secretary-General Anwarul K. Chowdhury was the keynote speaker at the Soka University and Soka Women's College commencement ceremony. On that occasion, he compared the departure of the graduates on their careers with humanity's departure on the adventure of world peace in the twenty-first century.

At the start of this year, I received a New Year's message from Mr. Chowdhury in which he stressed the importance of the home and family in building world peace. Expressing his support for my view that a family that interacts openly with society will produce individuals who are independent and creative, able to face hardships, he wrote, "If the message of a culture of peace and the values of tolerance, understanding and respect for diversity is inculcated in the children from an early stage by their families, I believe that in the coming decades the world will experience a distinct change for the better in our conflict- and violence-ridden societies."

This statement takes on added significance in light of the fact that these are the words of someone committed to working

for peace from the global perspective of the UN. I believe it reflects Mr. Chowdhury's understanding that, whatever hard-power emergency response may at times be necessary, the soft-power approach that touches the core of human beings is paramount; that without cultivating the spiritual dimension the goal of lasting peace will remain distant; and that the family--the smallest and perhaps earliest human community--is where this crucial work must be undertaken.

In a way, I believe this same understanding is reflected in the words of Katsuhiko Oku, the Japanese diplomat who was killed in the line of duty in Iraq last year. In a series of articles entitled "Iraku dayori (Letter from Iraq)," he describes the severe challenges facing that country. However, he writes, "There is hope; it is to be found in the brightly shining eyes of the children. ... When I look at the sparkling eyes of the children of Iraq, I feel certain that things will work out for this country."

In conflict-torn countries such as Iraq, the mistrust and hatred that fill the eyes of so many adults can provoke a sense of despair. But even then the shining eyes of children seem to shed a ray of hope into situations that condense the most intractable aspects of human history. It is for this reason that we must focus with renewed determination on education in the broadest sense--all the places and occasions where young people are fostered, where their spirits are energized and enlivened.

Here I am reminded of the words of my mentor, the second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda (1900--1958), whose limitless love for young people spurred him to make this impassioned call:

> Our struggle is one that requires that we love all living beings. Yet there are so many young people who are incapable of loving their own parents. How can they be expected to care about perfect strangers? The effort to overcome the coldness and indifference in our own lives and attain the same state of compassion as the Buddha is the essence of human revolution. (*Zenshu* vol.1: 58)

Human Revolution

It was Josei Toda who first used the expression "human revolution" to describe the process of inner reformation that drives a process of positive transformation of one's circumstances and environment. What Toda was giving expression to is the Buddhist ideal of "enlightenment"--a concept that has rarely been put in such concrete and accessible terms.

Love and compassion for all living beings is the ultimate message of Buddhism. Yet the compassion that is at the core of a universal love for humankind will remain an empty, unrealized ideal unless we can take that first, immediate step--exemplified here by the simple act of loving one's parents. "Dig beneath your feet, there you will find a spring." As this saying indicates, the consistent, daily effort to take that one step, while it may seem insignificant, is in fact all-encompassing.

> For Toda, this internal revolution was also the only way to bring about lasting social reform. He asserted that the only way to make any progress in eradicating widespread social evil and realize peace is for each individual human being to revolutionize their own inner nature. The essential foundation must be an inner transformation taking place in the lives of each human being and steadily expanding through society.

In this context, the single step is for both parent and child to build on the foundation of their existing emotional attachments, recognizing each other as distinct and independent individuals, interacting frankly on the basis of their mutual "otherness." In this way, they can provide each other with an opportunity to forge and foster each other. This makes the home a point of departure from which we take that first step out into the community and toward public spiritedness. The path from there leads to larger values, such as a healthy love of country and a universal love for all humanity.

The spirit of the world today is in retreat and regression, almost a kind of meltdown. And this is why the global questions of peace must be rethought from the perspective of the immediate reality of our lives. At the very least, any attempt to deal with these large problems that does not take such immediate realities into full consideration will not constitute a fundamental response. I therefore believe strongly in the value of each of us initiating action, taking that first step, from where we are standing right now.

De-clawing the demonic impulse

Here I would like to examine my mentor Josei Toda's declaration calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons, which he issued in September 1957 and which is his enduring message to humankind. At the time, the Cold War was growing ever more intense; the United States and the Soviet Union were leading the rush to conduct nuclear tests in a desperate effort to make these weapons even more effective.

Toda's declaration was issued just seven months before his death, during a brief respite in his final illness. To write it, he summoned the whole of his life force, pouring into it the entirety of his being. In it he condemned nuclear weapons as an "absolute evil," a threat to the collective right of humankind to exist, and bequeathed the mission of working for their abolition to young people.

Today a global movement calling for a ban on the testing of atomic or nuclear weapons has arisen. It is my

wish to go further; I want to expose and remove the claws that lie hidden in the depths of such weapons. I wish to declare that anyone who uses nuclear weapons, whichever country they might be from, whether they are victors or losers, should be sentenced to death. This is because we, the ordinary citizens of the world, have a right to live. Whoever threatens that right is a devil, a Satan, a monster. (*Zenshu* vol.4: 565)

Toda's reference to the death penalty was his way of stressing the overwhelming imperative for young people to engage in an all-out spiritual struggle for the abolition of these apocalyptic and, indeed, demonic weapons; it should not be construed literally. Rather, he was stressing the importance of confronting and eliminating the fundamental evil that lies hidden in the depths of people's lives. In Buddhist terms this refers to the urge to manipulate and exploit others for our own benefit. It is this deep-rooted impulse that allows people to use, without apparent qualm, weapons that instantly reduce so many lives to smoking ashes.

Toda's declaration sought to expose the fallacy of the theory of nuclear deterrence that was used to justify nuclear weapons as a necessary evil. This forceful warning against the total disregard for life that lies at the heart of such theories retains its significance and impact undiminished to this day. Of particular contemporary relevance is his focus, looking past political or military ideology, on the most fundamental dimension of the inner life of humanity.

The striking phrase "to remove the claws" demonstrates a remarkable perspective, discernment and insight. It signifies the transformation of our inner lives, of the destructive impulse in us all. This means reviving a concrete and vivid awareness of the existence of others, and developing the spirit of self-mastery, the ability to control our impulses and desires within the context of that awareness. This, I believe, is the true import of his statement. Ultimately it is not something outside ourselves that must be de-clawed: the grand historic challenge of abolishing nuclear weapons begins with the actions we initiate within our own lives.

From the start of the industrial revolution, modern civilization has been on a trajectory of fevered advance, served by the tools of scientific rationalism. The driving force has been the untrammeled pursuit of desire, the limitless inflation of the superficial self. Nothing manifests this more fiercely than nuclear weapons, which embody the willingness to hold the right to live of all people on Earth hostage to the predominance and security concerns of certain countries. They epitomize a civilization dedicated to the service of desire, born of the fusion of technological development and military objectives.

How can this be resisted and transformed? I believe that the key lies in fostering a genuine awareness of others, which in turn forms the basis for the development of such virtues as public consciousness and public spiritedness.

Identity and community

One hundred years ago, when the world was in the thrall of imperialism and colonialism, the founding president of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871--1944), described these forces as "national egotism." He also declared, "The state does not exist apart from the individual: the purpose of the state is to fulfill the aspirations that are the content of the hearts of individuals" (27). He further asserted that the ultimate objective of both individual lives and states must be "the way of humanity" or humanitarianism, something that can only be realized in actions whose aim is not limited to one's own happiness but includes the happiness of others (30).

In his philosophy of education, Makiguchi expresses a strong sympathy with the American thinker John Dewey (1859--1952), and in this context, Dewey's ideas about the nature of a public identity as the basis for democracy are of interest. In *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey quotes W. H. Hudson's description of life in a village in Wiltshire (England).

> Each house has its center of human life with life of bird and beast, and the centers were in touch with one another, connected like a row of children linked together by their hands... I imagined the case of a cottager at one end of the village occupied in chopping up a tough piece of wood or stump and accidentally letting fall his heavy sharp axe on to his foot, inflicting a grievous wound. The tidings of the accident would fly from mouth to mouth to the other extremity of the village, a mile distant; not only would each villager quickly know of it, but have at the same time a vivid mental image of his fellow villager at the moment of his misadventure, the sharp glittering axe falling on to his foot, the red blood flowing from the wound; and he would at the same time feel the wound in his own foot and the shock to his system. (40-41)

The disaster that has befallen one of their fellows is not simply known as fact by the villagers, it is felt and experienced as a shared and personal pain. This vital sensitivity and awareness of life is the core of a public identity. It is this overwhelming sense of reality that leaves such a strong impression.

In a small community such as this not only humans but also animal life and even insentient nature retain the distinct outlines of their separateness and "otherness" while at the same time being intimately connected and bound to each other within the framework of shared destiny. It is only by entering into and participating in the community that people can achieve a solid sense of identity, positioning and giving meaning to their own life and death within a greater whole.

Dewey declares, "With such a condition of intimacy, the state is an impertinence" (41).

This is perhaps reminiscent of two characters in the works of Tolstoy who are said to be semiautobiographical--Olenin in *The Cossacks* and Levin in *Anna Karenina*--urban intellectuals who happen upon experiences very close to revelation in which their souls are elevated and merge with the life of all beings. (But this should not be mistaken for a call, along the lines of Rousseau (235), for a "return to nature" which was the subject of Voltaire's jibe: "When I read your works, I feel like walking on all fours." As the fact that Rousseau went on to construct a social theory of popular sovereignty proves, it is

impossible to eliminate all that is artificial and truly return to nature.)

What Dewey was examining in his book was the nature of public virtue and public interest in the years after World War I, as the masses started to gain full entry into the political process. He was tackling the question of how--in a world in which villages and other small-scale communities had been dismantled in the process of creating the modern state--to effect the transformation from a "Great Society" (great only in its scale) to a "Great Community" whose constituents identify themselves as members of a "Public." And as Dewey indicates, it is difficult if not impossible to create this Great Community in the absence of some means of preserving and transmitting the core sense of identity that is the basis of public virtue and public interest in small communities.

Dewey saw the mass media as playing a key role in forming the Great Community. I am afraid, however, that it takes little consideration to answer the question of whether the media has fully or adequately played such a role in the years since Dewey set out these ideas. While responsibility for this cannot be laid entirely at the feet of the media, I personally feel that a cynical indifference to others has become far more pervasive than it was in his time. The challenge Dewey defined for us has remained unmet and, if anything, the problem has been received by our age in exacerbated form.

Indeed, it has been further accelerated by two major currents of our age: globalization and virtualization, the intertwined trends that are driving postindustrial societies. There has been a reaction against globalization in recent years sparked in large part by the lopsided benefits accruing to its central proponent, the United States. The spread and penetration of information networks, meanwhile, shows no sign of slowing; it is far too early to pass judgment on the final balance of the benefits and drawbacks, the positive and negative aspects of this complex and far-reaching phenomenon. Even so, the virtual representation of reality is clearly at the heart of the information society, and it is the implications of this that I would like to examine next.

The disconnect of virtual reality

Rapidly evolving information technology is heir to the core values of modernization and uses the appeal of convenience and efficiency to both sate and stimulate desire. One result has been the weakening of the frameworks--family, community, workplace, school, state--from which society has conventionally been configured. Physical distances that separate people have lost meaning through the creation of global networks; events on the other side of the globe enter our lives instantaneously through the medium of computers and television. This has brought a vast and largely beneficial expansion of freedom of action and of choice relative to goods and services, hobbies and interests, employment and residence. Choice is increasingly being extended to family composition and even citizenship.

We must also be aware, however, of the pitfalls of the virtualization on which so much of this new freedom hinges.

The spread of the Internet has meant that the way in which information and wealth are generated, conveyed and experienced has become increasingly virtual. In a sense, of course, information is by its nature virtual. The original function of money, meanwhile, was as a token of exchange for goods and services produced by actual economic activities. To the extent, however, that it is detached from such activities and becomes the object of speculation, desires are amplified without limit and the resistance and stability that are the special qualities of reality are lost. The result is cycles of unbridled greed as the quest for money generates further desire. This is the addictive allure of virtual wealth.

The only effective counterbalance is to keep firmly in view the fact that virtual information and wealth, while they can supplement and enhance our experience of reality, cannot replace it. Computers and communications technologies can never be a substitute for the actual human contact of dialogue, the face-to-face interaction of meetings and classroom instruction, for example. And as the hero of Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* discovers on his uninhabited desert island, money is no substitute for goods or services, much less for human companionship.

Virtual reality is fundamentally incompatible with an uncomfortable, even painful--yet essential--aspect of human experience: the way our encounters with others force us to face and confront ourselves, and the inner struggle that this sparks. Buddhism speaks of the twin sufferings of being forced to part from those we love and to be in the company of those we hate. Efficiency and convenience are frequently interpreted to mean the avoidance of such struggles. There is a certain irony in the fact that these measures of ease actually render modern life an inhospitable environment for developing self-mastery and a concomitant interest in the public good.

Though contemporary society is heavily dependent on communications and information technology, it is nonetheless composed of and supported by the activities of people. The ideal of the age may be a network of "free individuals" who have broken the bonds of traditional ties and encumbrances. To be genuinely free, however, they must be self-standing, disciplined and grounded in reality; they must be able to render clear judgments without being carried away by the torrents of information that wash around them. But these are the hardest qualities to develop in a virtualized society that provides scant opportunity for the training and tempering of individuals. How can this dilemma be resolved?

The answer, I believe, lies close to home but requires that we take a different, perhaps counterintuitive approach. It is the raw sense of reality, the unmediated responsiveness to living and to pain, that can breathe new life into this stifling virtual world. If we could but learn, like Dewey's Wiltshire villagers, to feel the wound and shock of others' pain as our own...

I even believe that such awareness and sensitivity represents the single greatest deterrent to war.

Encountering reality

King Ashoka, known as the unifier of ancient India, began the inner drama that radically reoriented his life toward peace after witnessing the enormous horror and death wrought by war (Sadakata). This inner revolution, which transformed the remainder of his long reign, occurred because his life was receptive to the reality of the suffering his decision to invade a neighboring country had caused. I believe that each of us can, in our immediate surroundings and intimate relations, find similar opportunities to exercise and develop the possibilities of empathetic connection to the sufferings of others.

Unless there is sadness, there can be no joy. Unless there is suffering, there can be no happiness. On this point, the observations of Masahiro Morioka, professor of human sciences at Osaka Prefecture University, about the underlying pathology of contemporary civilization are of great interest. "The 'painless civilization,'" he writes, "is one permeated by structures and mechanisms designed to enable people to avoid suffering and pursue pleasure." Because this kind of civilization is so geared to the avoidance of suffering, he continues, it actually robs us of the possibility of experiencing the joys of life itself. "As a result, we end up living empty lives, surrounded by money and things but devoid of deep joy" ("Ron'en").

In such a society, it is awareness of and responsibility toward others that is lost. To quote Professor Morioka again: "Those who have most successfully anesthetized themselves against their own pain are least able to feel the pain of others. They are unable to hear the cries of others and will disregard them without even noticing they have done so" (*Mutsu* 33). He also writes: "When they find themselves in conflict with others, because they make no attempt to alter their own frame of reference, there is no genuine dialogue. They continue to assert themselves even if it means pushing others aside" (14).

To live this way is to live under the sway of what Buddhism refers to as the demonic impulse to use and bend others to one's will. Professor Morioka looks to the power of life itself, which can change people from within, for the source of energy to break this impasse. He calls for the rejuvenation of natural human vitality as the most urgent priority.

The issue that Professor Morioka defines is a central concern in Buddhism and is symbolized in the "four encounters" that are traditionally said to have motivated Shakyamuni to abandon earthly attachments and dedicate himself to seeking truth. As is well known, the man who would become known to the world as the Buddha was born as a prince of the Shakya clan in ancient India. He lived a life of comfort, lacking for nothing, until one day a great doubt arose within him:

> While I was born wealthy and extremely gentle and kind, as you can see, [one day] the following thought occurred to me. In their foolishness, common mortals--even though they themselves will age and cannot avoid aging--when they see others aging and falling into decline, ponder it, are distressed by it, and feel shame and hate--all without ever thinking of it as their own problem. In their foolishness, common mortals--even though they themselves will fall ill and cannot avoid illness--when they see others who are ill, ponder it, are distressed by it, and feel shame and hate--all without ever thinking of it as their own problem.

In their foolishness, common mortals--even though they themselves will die and cannot avoid dying--when

they see others dying, ponder it, are distressed by it, and feel shame and hate-all without ever thinking of it

as their own problem. (Nakamura 156-7)

Buddhist tradition holds that Shakyamuni's decision to seek the truth was motivated by his confrontation with the reality of human suffering--the "four sufferings" of birth, aging, sickness and death, which are intrinsic to human existence. For Shakyamuni this meant not only the direct impact of these sufferings on people's lives but, and perhaps even more fundamentally, the deep-rooted indifference, arrogance and discriminatory consciousness that prevent us from feeling others' pain as our own. This is what the repeated phrase, "all without ever thinking of it as their own problem," warns us against.

Thus the starting point for the Buddhist worldview is Shakyamuni's insistence that real happiness--joy that springs from the very depths of life--can be experienced only when we resist the impulse to turn away from the suffering of others and instead challenge it as our own. Such happiness lives and breathes only when we take suffering as an opportunity to forge and temper our inner life, and commit to the hard yet rewarding mission of working for the happiness of both ourselves and others.

Contemporary civilization, determined to avoid all pain, has tried to ignore death. Rather than facing the inevitable sufferings of life and death, we try to manage and control them with biotechnology and cutting-edge medical therapies. Such efforts, of great value in themselves, have often come at the expense of the even more crucial work of developing modes of human and social existence that will enable people to successfully confront these sufferings and to enjoy truly fulfilling lives.

In averting its eyes from death, our civilization attempts to externalize death, making it "someone else's problem," numbing people to the pain and suffering of others. I cannot help but feel that humanity's collective turning away from personal confrontation with death has fundamentally weakened restraints against violence. The result has been the mass slaughter of two world wars and countless regional conflicts that made the past century an era of "megadeath."

This is the deeper meaning of Josei Toda's call for the abolition of nuclear weapons and his determination to "de-claw" the forces lying behind their creation. Nuclear weapons are the most horrific manifestation of a civilization that treats death as someone else's problem. By damning them in the strongest possible terms, Toda was putting the knife to the darkest aspects of modern civilization in order to transform it.

Just as there can be no unhappiness that is strictly limited to others, happiness is not something that we can hoard or keep to ourselves. We are faced with the challenge and opportunity to overcome our narrow egotism, to recognize ourselves in others as we sense others within us, and to experience the highest fulfillment as we mutually illuminate each other with the

inner brilliance of our lives. It is to this challenge that the members of the SGI, as practitioners of Buddhism, are determined to rise.

A movement for people's empowerment

Next I would like to discuss specific measures aimed at building a global society of peace and coexistence as we move toward 2005--a year of multiple significance in that it marks the sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II, of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and of the establishment of the United Nations. I would like to make proposals in the following three areas: 1) the strengthening and reform of the UN; 2) nuclear disarmament and progress toward abolition; and 3) the expansion and enhancement of human security.

In addition to the debate over the use of military force, the Iraq crisis highlighted the UN's inability to function adequately when there is serious division among the Security Council members. Amidst deepening concern about this situation, the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change was launched at UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's initiative, and its first meeting was held in December 2003. It is mandated to: examine the current challenges to peace and security; consider the contribution that collective action can make in addressing these challenges; review the functioning of the major organs of the UN and the relationship between them; and recommend ways of strengthening the UN through reform of its institutions and processes. The results of its deliberations are to be reported back to the Secretary-General in December before the end of the UN General Assembly's regular session.

The chairperson of the panel is the former prime minister of Thailand, Anand Panyarachun. In October 2000, we met in Tokyo and discussed the prospects for the UN in the twenty-first century. Pointing out its inevitable limitations as a collective body of sovereign states, he observed that the organization was effective to the exact degree that its member states wished it to be so. He stressed, however, that its existence should be welcomed as a source of hope as it was undeniably making the world a better place. I fully share his view.

There are, in certain quarters, persistent questions about the effectiveness or even necessity of the UN. Some aspects of the organization as it stands may indeed be incompatible with the realities of today's world. But with 191 member states, there is no organization more universal than the UN; it is the only body that can truly serve as a foundation for and give legitimacy to international cooperation. In the absence of a realistic alternative, the best course is to strengthen it and make it more effective. The SGI has sought to do this by generating grassroots support for the UN on a global scale.

In order fully to learn and reflect the lessons of the Iraq crisis, it will be necessary to develop new systems and procedures that can be invoked when the international community again faces difficult decisions. But whatever form these take, it is clear that the UN must continue to be the pivot for international solidarity.

1) United Nations reform

I would like to put forward two proposals for institutional reform of the UN along with ideas for creating a more positive environment for its effective functioning.

First, the authority of the General Assembly needs to be enhanced as the focus of efforts to strengthen the UN.

In the UN Charter, the Security Council is given primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security; it is the only organ whose decisions are legally binding on member states (*Articles* 24-25). In actuality, however, the veto power granted only to the five permanent members prevents the Council from fulfilling its function when agreement cannot be reached.

In order to overcome the Security Council's limitations, it is essential to empower the General Assembly through strengthening both its structures and practices.

The UN Charter stipulates that the General Assembly's responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security is subordinate to that of the Security Council. But as a global forum for dialogue open to all member states, the General Assembly is uniquely representative of the members' views. There is a body of precedent for the General Assembly meeting in emergency special session and making recommendations to member states when the Security Council fails to fulfill its primary responsibility due, for example, to the exercise of the veto. This process was established by the "Uniting for Peace" resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 1950, which enables emergency special sessions to be called by a vote of any nine members of the Security Council, or by a majority of the UN member states.

In the twenty-first century, the UN must be capable of fully representing and reflecting the views of the international community in searching for the most appropriate means of resolving problems. The practice of holding emergency special sessions of the General Assembly should be encouraged, and routes established by which their deliberations can be fed back to the Security Council--particularly when it is deadlocked on a matter involving coercive measures. This will provide a broader basis for making the difficult decisions needed to meet the new types of threat to peace that have emerged in recent years. In December 2003, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution calling for steps to "increase the body's efficiency and effectiveness and to raise the level of its visibility, so that its decisions might have greater impact" (A/RES/58/126).

The strength and authority of the UN lie in its ability to build consensus within the international community. While measures to counter threats to peace and security must be effective, even more crucially they must be seen as having legitimacy,

which is in turn the basis for soft power.

My second proposal for institutional reform concerns the need to coordinate and integrate the strategies and activities of the UN agencies that provide different forms of support for people and societies caught up in violent conflict. This must cover the entire process from the start of conflict to post-conflict peace-building activities.

Recently, the lack of continuity of relief activities in conflict situations has been identified as a serious problem. The need to eliminate such gaps is stressed in *Human Security Now*, the final report of the Commission on Human Security issued in May 2003. It states, "With a focus on protecting people rather than adhering to institutional mandates, the current compartmentalization among the numerous uncoordinated actors should be overcome" (134).

This report also maintains that all actors must work under a unified leadership and focus on the needs of people and societies afflicted by the ravages of conflict. "The responsibility to protect people in conflict should be complemented by a responsibility to rebuild, particularly after an international military intervention. The measure of success is not the cessation of conflict-it is the quality of the peace that is left behind" (136).

There is an increasingly urgent need to develop a comprehensive framework for relief activities to respond to conflicts of an ever more complex nature. I believe that a body should be created within the UN to take effective international leadership for this particular challenge. Specifically, the Trusteeship Council, which has suspended operations, could be reconstituted as a "peace rehabilitation council" to assume this responsibility. This builds on an idea I discussed in my 1995 proposal, where I suggested that the Trusteeship Council be given a new role in protecting cultural and ethnic diversity in areas of conflict, working closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Incorporating some of those functions, this peace rehabilitation council could assume primary responsibility for promoting and coordinating the whole range of activities from humanitarian relief to post-conflict peace-building. As it carries out its mandate, it should maintain continuous communication with all affected countries. Also, to ensure a high level of transparency and credibility, regular progress reports should be made to all concerned parties.

In order to strengthen the UN, popular engagement and support are essential--at least as important as the efforts of member states. The world body has been strapped by financial constraints for many years, and support in a wide range of areas is required.

There have, of course, been positive developments. The Secretary-General's Panel of Eminent Persons on Civil Society and UN Relationships, for example, was formed in February 2003. Chaired by former President of Brazil Fernando Enrique Cardoso and committed to an "open, transparent and consultative process," it is working to compile a report on how to make the interaction between civil society and the UN more meaningful.

Welcoming these developments, I believe they could be further encouraged by a "UN people's forum," a gathering of the representatives of NGOs and civil society, perhaps on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the UN's establishment in 2005. Following up on the work of the Millennium NGO Forum held in 2000, this would help strengthen the capacity of the UN to contribute to peace in the new era.

The Boston Research Center for the 21st Century (BRC), an international peace institute which I founded in 1993, supported the UN during its fiftieth anniversary in 1995 by conducting a series of dialogues on the recommendations of the Commission on Global Governance. The publication of these dialogues as a book entitled *A People's Response to Our Global Neighborhood* was followed by two seminars at the UN specifically exploring the commission's idea for a civil society forum. The SGI and its affiliated institutions are committed to building a global people's solidarity, supporting the UN through activities such as collaborative research and the sponsoring of symposiums and public forums.

Complementing these suggestions for UN reform, I would also like to stress the importance of fostering a global environment in which conflict is resolved through the rule of law as a central countermeasure to terrorism.

Important steps in this direction have already been taken. For example, the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) was brought into being within the UN on the basis of Security Council Resolution 1373, adopted in September 2001, and the Counter-Terrorism Action Group was created for the purpose of aiding the CTC's activities during the G8 Summit held in Evian, France, in June 2003.

The prevention of terrorism requires improving the function and efficacy of the judicial systems of each country. Committed international cooperation is essential in supporting national efforts, and the bodies described above can play a key role. It is crucially important to create, through an international network of cooperation and with an emphasis on preventive measures, the conditions in which terrorism is forestalled and eliminated.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) needs to be central to this process. Officially launched by the swearing-in of its judges in March 2003, the ICC is the first permanent international criminal court established to try individuals for war crimes, genocide or crimes against humanity. It is important to increase the number of states participating in the ICC and encourage its effective functioning.

Counter-Terrorism

The Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) was established in September 2001 to monitor the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1373, which calls on member states to fight terrorism and encourages them to cooperate in preventing and suppressing the financing and support of terrorism, as well as strengthening their judicial frameworks to take action against the perpetrators of such acts.

The Counter-Terrorism Action Group (CTAG) is a G-8 initiative to expand and coordinate training and assistance, focusing especially on financial aid, for countries with "the will but not the skill" to combat terror, especially in the following critical areas:

- Terrorist financing;
- Customs and immigration controls;
- Illegal arms trafficking; and
- Police and law enforcement.

The ICC can help sever the cycles of hatred and violence that drive conflict and terror. It can contribute to establishing a culture of resolving conflicts through recourse to law rather than resort to force. Universality and credibility are crucial to the effectiveness of the court, and in this sense also the broadest possible participation is called for. In our capacity as an NGO, the SGI will strive to develop broad-based global support for the ICC through various activities to raise public awareness of its existence and the potential it offers.

International Humanitarian Law

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is the body of rules which, in wartime, protects people who are not or are no longer participating in the hostilities. Its central purpose is to limit and prevent human suffering in times of armed conflict. The rules are to be observed not only by governments and their armed forces, but also by armed opposition groups and any other parties to a conflict. The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their two Additional Protocols of 1977 are the principal instruments of humanitarian law. Among the areas covered are protection of civilian populations and treatment of the wounded, sick and shipwrecked, as well as prisoners of war.

In the wake of the shocking August 2003 terrorist attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad, the Security Council adopted a resolution expressing strong condemnation of terror against UN personnel and humanitarian relief workers in zones of conflict, identifying these acts as war crimes. The principle should be established for trying heinous crimes of terrorism in an international judicial venue such as the ICC. We should not underestimate the deterrent potential of such measures.

Also in this connection it is necessary to reinforce International Humanitarian Law, which was developed to define the legally acceptable behavior of combatants in wartime. This is needed to respond to new types of conflict, such as civil wars that spill over international borders, and to ensure that counter-terrorism measures are conducted in accord with the spirit of humanitarian law.

2) Nuclear disarmament and abolition

Here I would like to discuss the prospects for reducing and ultimately eliminating the world's nuclear arsenals.

In December 2003, the government of Iran signed an additional protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) granting its inspectors broader rights of access. In the same month, Libya agreed to dismantle its programs to develop and manufacture weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. It also agreed to accept an international inspection team immediately.

While such news represents enormous progress in nuclear non-proliferation, eliminating the threat of nuclear weapons entirely from the world unfortunately remains a distant prospect. I am convinced that to achieve any lasting breakthrough, it will be vital to shift emphasis from non-proliferation--the main focus in recent years--to reduction and eventual abolition.

Of course, bolstering non-proliferation regimes is still a prerequisite for any progress in nuclear disarmament. This is why I have repeatedly called for the earliest possible entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), whose text was finalized in 1996. An international monitoring system is being developed under the CTBT's verification regime, and it is said that once this is fully operational it will no longer be possible to conceal nuclear tests.

More than seven years have passed since the CTBT was adopted. While the treaty languishes awaiting entry into force, fears of moves to resume nuclear testing have grown. Last year, for example, the U.S. government allocated funds for research on low-yield and powerful earth-penetrating nuclear weapons.

In July 2003 the CTBT was ratified by Algeria, one of the states whose ratification is required for it to enter into force. International public opinion must be mobilized to ensure that the remaining twelve such states, which include the United States, ratify as soon as possible.

On a related matter, there is a need to formalize into a global system the Negative Security Assurance pledges under which countries that possess nuclear weapons have undertaken not to use them against non-nuclear-weapon states.

> Thus far, 41 of the 44 Annex 2 states have signed the CTBT, and 32 have ratified it. The nine Annex 2 states that have signed but not ratified are: China, Colombia, Congo, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, the United States of America and Viet Nam. Three Annex 2 states have neither signed nor ratified: India, North Korea and Pakistan.

Steps such as these, taken in earnest, embody the spirit of self-mastery I mentioned earlier as constituting the essence of civilized behavior. Demonstrating this spirit in a way that people everywhere can understand and appreciate would be the most powerful deterrent to war and terrorism. And nothing would do more to create a stable system for non-proliferation, and boost the credibility and effectiveness of nuclear disarmament treaties, than for those countries that have nuclear weapons to make good on their long-standing commitment to disarm.

The primary objective of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. We cannot, however, overlook the fact that the NPT has more signatories than any other nuclear-arms-related treaty for the very reason that its text specifically requires nations to pursue negotiations in good faith toward the elimination of their nuclear arsenals (*Article VI*).

In 1995, on the occasion of the decision to extend the treaty indefinitely, documents entitled "Strengthening the Review Process for the Treaty" and "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament" were adopted (A/57/387). This strengthening of the framework for disarmament must be understood as a manifestation of the powerful will of the international community.

In my proposal last year, I suggested that as 2005, when the next NPT Review Conference is scheduled, marks the sixtieth anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a special session of the UN General Assembly dedicated to the abolition of nuclear weapons should be convened and attended by heads of state and government. I also urged discussion on the formation of a new specialized agency within the UN mandated to address the issue of nuclear disarmament.

The final document adopted by the 2000 NPT Review Conference includes the "unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals" (NPT/CONF.2000/28). This document also calls for the "engagement as soon as appropriate of all the nuclear-weapon States in the process leading to the total elimination of their nuclear weapons." The gravity of these commitments must be borne in mind and all efforts made to realize them.

The first step must be for the five declared nuclear-weapon states--who are also the five permanent members of the

Security Council--to fulfill their responsibility to all parties to the NPT by initiating negotiations in good faith to achieve nuclear disarmament. I am confident that agreement by these five powers to begin negotiations ahead of the 2005 NPT Review Conference, or the special session of the General Assembly that I am proposing, would offer a lifeline, a way of breaking the current impasse. I urge them most strongly to start drawing up a concrete timetable for nuclear abolition.

Here I would like to comment on efforts to address fears that North Korea is developing nuclear weapons, which have heightened since December 2002 when it announced the decision to reactivate its nuclear facilities. Talks were held in Beijing in August 2003 among six nations: the United States, Russia, China, South Korea, North Korea and Japan.

Although no concrete progress was made, the parties did reach consensus on a number of points, as shown in the summary issued by the host country China, including to "solve the nuclear problem peacefully through dialogue, to maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, and to pave the way for permanent peace," and "not to take actions that could escalate the situation in the process of resolving the issue peacefully" (MOFA).

Attempts to hold further talks stalled, and although in January of this year North Korea moved to accept an unofficial U.S. delegation and allow inspection of its nuclear facilities, little substantive progress has been achieved. For Japan, the issue of the abduction of Japanese nationals by North Korean operatives in the past is not something that can be skirted or ignored. However, it is important that each country take a positive approach to developing the framework for multilateral dialogue that has finally emerged, adhering closely to the spirit of the above summary.

For my part, as well as hoping for an early start to a second round of the six-party talks, I believe we should be looking to institute a formal framework for such talks, as a robust vehicle for confidence-building measures on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia. As a long-term goal we should aim toward the establishment of a regional body--a Northeast Asian Union--with the more immediate objective of creating a Northeast Asian nuclear-free zone.

3) Human security

The third challenge I would like to address is that of expanding and enhancing human security.

Human security is a concept that has emerged in recent years from the effort to rethink established notions of security. It is a new approach centered on security for people rather than states. It addresses not only the threats posed by direct forms of violence such as war, terrorism and crime, but also poverty and environmental pollution, violation of human rights, discrimination and lack of access to education and sanitation. These are all issues that seriously impact the safety and dignity of human beings.

In his New Year's message, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned that the war in Iraq had distracted the world from addressing threats that kill "millions and millions of people every year" such as extreme poverty and hunger, unsafe drinking water, environmental degradation and infectious disease. He appealed to world leaders to make 2004 "the year when we begin to turn the tide" (SG/SM/9095).

Since the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) first outlined the basic concept of human security in 1994, recognition of its importance has been growing steadily. The year 2001 saw the formation of the Commission on Human Security, whose report *Human Security Now: Protecting and Empowering People* I referenced earlier. Reviewing the evolution of the concept, the report defines human security as "protecting fundamental freedoms--freedoms that are the essence of life" and "protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations" (4).

What I find striking about the report is that it identifies empowerment, together with protection, as one of the two keys to the realization of human security. It stresses the importance of developing the innate strengths and abilities of human beings, empowering them to find their own happiness as they contribute to society:

> People's ability to act on their own behalf--and on behalf of others--is the second key to human security.
> Fostering that ability differentiates human security from state security, from humanitarian work and even
> from much development work. Empowerment is important because people develop their potential as
> individuals and as communities. (11)

This resonates with my own conviction that the struggle to create something of new and positive value within society by taking action for the sake of others forms the indestructible foundation for peace.

As I have stressed on many occasions, including the earlier part of this proposal, I believe that education must be the focus of efforts to extend human security.

Education for All: Gender Equality

The Dakar Framework for Action and the Millennium Declaration, both adopted in 2000, established gender equality goals to which all states are committed: eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary schooling by 2005; achieving gender equality by 2015.

Progress has been made particularly at primary level, where the ratio of girls to boys enrolled

In the world today 860 million adults are said to be illiterate, and 121 million children have no access to school (A/RES/56/116). The Education for All campaign, spearheaded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), aims to realize universal basic education with concrete benchmarks for achievement. Last year was also the start of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003--2012).

Literacy opens the door to knowledge, empowering people to develop their innate abilities and fulfill their potential. Raising literacy rates among women, who account for two-thirds of the illiterate, and providing girls with greater access to primary education would undoubtedly prove powerful in improving the lives not only of women but also of their families and communities.

The State of the World's Children 2004, released by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in December 2003, warns that none of the world's development objectives can be achieved without progress in girls' education, and calls for urgent reform of international development efforts. Lack of funding has caused many countries to fall behind in the drive for universal primary education, and this is an obstacle that needs to be eliminated through international cooperation.

According to estimates by the UN and the World Bank, the target of realizing primary education for all by the year 2015 could be achieved if just four days' worth of the world's annual military expenditure were diverted to education every year (*Human Security* 117-8).

Universal primary education is one of the UN's eight Millennium Development Goals (UNDP). To help us move closer to it, I believe there is a definite role for a "global primary education fund" as a focus for greater international funding cooperation.

Like these initiatives to ensure a basic education for all, human rights education is a cornerstone of the drive to build a world without war.

My friend and co-author the late Norman Cousins (1915--1990) wrote in his book *Human Options*, "A casual attitude toward human hurt and pain is the surest sign of educational failure" (30). As this wise American journalist and activist warned, the price of our collective failures in the endeavor of education in the broadest sense of the term is resentment and the potential for conflict. In many societies tensions simmer below the surface, ready to erupt into outright violence, especially when exacerbated by economic downturn and rising unemployment. To successfully eliminate violent conflict from the world and

build a basis for peaceful coexistence, we need to transform these underlying feelings of hostility and prejudice.

It was with this in mind that I called for a Decade of Human Rights Education for Peace to follow on from the UN Decade of Human Rights Education (1995--2004), in a message addressed to the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa, three years ago. Last August the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights issued a recommendation calling for the General Assembly to proclaim a second Decade for Human Rights Education to begin on January 1, 2005 (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2003/L.14). I wholeheartedly welcome this initiative, and urge that implementation be focused particularly on children, who are the protagonists of the future. At the same time, I believe that the larger goal of building a global society of peace and coexistence must be kept firmly in sight.

For its part, the SGI will continue to support the activities of the UN, and work in partnership with other NGOs to do whatever we can to promote peace education and human rights education across the globe.

The year 2004 is the International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition. This surely makes it the ideal opportunity to learn critical lessons from the past, and build the foundations for overcoming racism and intolerance. The crucial importance of human rights education is underlined by numerous examples in recent years of mass media stirring up hatred against people of a specific nationality or ethnic group, and a proliferation of "hate" websites attacking people for their ethnicity, culture or creed. This is exacerbated by the rapid growth of the information society, which has fueled fears that it may become a breeding ground for conflict and hate crimes.

In December 2003 the UN convened the first World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva, Switzerland. As well as discussing the growing gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" of information, the so-called digital divide, the summit was an important opportunity to examine many aspects of the information society, including the kinds of abuse cited above. The Declaration of Principles adopted by the summit, while acknowledging freedom of the press and media independence as indispensable, called for the responsible use and treatment of information "in accordance with the highest ethical and professional standards" (8). It is my hope that there will be further in-depth discussion of the ethical issues surrounding emerging technologies in advance of the second information summit next year in Tunisia.

Planting the seeds of peace

Making progress on the wide-ranging challenges of human security will require bold, innovative ideas and sustained effort. To this end, I hope that the world's diverse societies will engage in the kind of "humanitarian competition" envisaged by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi--to vie with each other to make the greatest and most lasting contribution to human happiness.

Here we can take inspiration from Thailand, for example, which has recently established a Ministry of Social Development and Human Security.

In this connection I would also strongly advocate the sharing of knowledge and best practices through such initiatives as organizing technical exchanges and providing skilled personnel to help realize human security on a global scale. And most importantly, I believe such activities will achieve most when not confined to the governmental level, but when sustained by grassroots understanding and action.

A crucial foundation for such action is the opportunity to learn about the issues facing our world in a way that enables people to grapple with them as a personal concern. Efforts to educate and empower people at the grassroots level can set in motion waves of transformation that know no bounds. Based on this belief, the SGI has organized exhibitions and other public information activities in support of UN disarmament and human rights campaigns, and of international conferences such as the Earth Summits. Among the issues explored have been nuclear disarmament, human rights and sustainable development.

Last year, as part of our peace education program, an exhibition on the life and ideas of Linus Pauling (1901--1994; Nobel Laureate for both Peace and Chemistry) was organized at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris and the European Headquarters of the UN in Geneva. In February, SGI-USA will organize an exhibition entitled "Building a Culture of Peace for the Children of the World" at the UN Headquarters in New York.

Eliminating the word "misery" from the human lexicon was the fervent wish of my mentor, Josei Toda. The Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, which I founded to respond to his vision, has been deeply involved in projects to promote human security and global governance, and building a peace research network worldwide.

I am currently engaged in a dialogue with peace scholar Dr. Elise Boulding, who has long advocated a culture of peace as the foundation for human life in the twenty-first century. In the course of our exchanges, Dr. Boulding has noted that human beings do not exist solely in the present; a short-term perspective makes us vulnerable to being overwhelmed by present events. To maintain hope, we must take constructive action with a long-term view.

Sustainable Development

In 1987, the Brundtland Report, "Our Common Future," published by an international group of politicians and experts on environment and development, defined sustainable development as that which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs."

After two "Earth Summits," the Rio Conference on the Environment and Development in 1992 and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, sustainable development is now a widely used term, but progress towards actualizing it has been slow. Sustainable development is seen as having three "pillars"-- economic and social development and environmental protection. The years 2005 to 2014 have been designated as the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, following a proposal initiated by SGI representatives in Japan.

Looking far into the future, President Toda predicted that the Soka Gakkai would become a profound and inexhaustible source of hope and inspiration for all humankind. Embracing that proud mission as we look forward to the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the SGI in 2005, we will continue to forge solidarity among the world's citizens as the basis for a robust and enduring culture of peace.

Empowerment of the people, by the people and for the people--individuals taking initiative to realize their infinite potential as they contribute to society--is the basis for the SGI's movement of human revolution.

In January 1975, when people assembled from all over the world to launch the SGI, I called on that diverse gathering: rather than seeking to bring your own lives to bloom, devote yourselves to planting the seeds of peace throughout the world. And I vowed to do the same.

My conviction remains firm today. Peace is not some abstract concept far removed from our everyday lives. It is a question of how each one of us plants and cultivates the seeds of peace in the reality of daily living, in the depths of our being, throughout our lives. I am certain that herein lies the most reliable path to lasting peace.

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