



SGI Peace News

Activities of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) to Promote a Culture of Peace

November 2017 (Vol. 20)

SGI Urges Nuclear Weapons Abolition at Vatican Conference

Vatican, November 10-11, 2017

Hiromasa Ikeda, Vice President of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), joined other participants in stressing the moral case for ridding the world of nuclear weapons and urged increased efforts in awareness-raising at the conference, “Perspectives for a World Free from Nuclear Weapons and for Integral Disarmament” held at the Vatican in Rome on November 10 and 11.

Mr. Ikeda stated: “Nuclear weapons are dangerous from a security perspective. From an ethical and moral perspective, they are wrong. This renders them unacceptable in any hands. With the geopolitical risks of nuclear conflict rising to unprecedented levels, it is vital that this awareness be shared widely by all people.”



He also stressed the SGI’s educational focus on creating opportunities for dialogue: “This can foster a shared awareness that nuclear weapons—in any hands—are dangerous and wrong as a means of protecting the things and people we treasure.”

The SGI was one of 13 cooperating organizations involved in the conference hosted by the Vatican’s newly created Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

On November 10, conference participants received an audience with His Holiness Pope Francis, who spoke of the “mentality of fear” created by nuclear weapons, saying: “Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family, which must rather be inspired by an ethics of solidarity.”

Several Nobel Peace Prize Laureates addressed the conference, including Beatrice Fihn, Executive Director of 2017 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate ICAN (the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons), who thanked people of faith for their efforts toward the historic adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in July this year, saying: “This treaty is not the final step in our journey out of nuclear darkness, but the beginning of the end.”

Other Nobel Peace Prize Laureates who spoke included Muhammad ElBaradei, Jody Williams, Muhammad Yunus, Mairead Maguire and Adolfo Perez Esquivel. High-level representatives of the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross and Masako Wada of Nihon Hidankyo, a victim of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, also spoke.

For more information on the conference click [here](#)

To access the full speech by Vice President Ikeda click [here](#)

SGI and ICAN: Friendship and Collaboration

Soka Gakkai International (SGI), an international partner of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) since 2007, would like to wholeheartedly congratulate ICAN on their receiving of the Nobel Peace Prize 2017. In so doing, we offered this brief reflective account, looking at the past decade and at how SGI and ICAN have worked together toward our shared aim of nuclear abolition, and at how we have developed “a partnership underlined by friendship.”

The partnership between SGI and ICAN can be traced back to a long-time friendship and cooperation between SGI and IPPNW, which in turn stemmed from a friendship between SGI President Daisaku Ikeda and IPPNW Co-President Bernard Lown. Amidst their discussions they had agreed to initiate a collaborative endeavor toward their shared goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons. In September 1989, following such agreement, SGI and IPPNW cosponsored an exhibition titled *War and Peace* at the UN Headquarters in New York, in cooperation with the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs, and this was the first collaboration between these two organization.

For the full text of the article click [here](#)

***Seeds of Hope* exhibition in Russia**

Moscow, Russia, September 25–30, 2017

On the occasion of the Fifth International Scientific Congress titled “Globalistics-2017” on September 25–30, the exhibition *Seeds of Hope—Visions of Sustainability, Steps Toward Change* was showcased in the lobby of the Russian Moscow State University (MSU) Fundamental Library. At the ribbon cutting event, Dr. Ilya Ilyin, Acting Dean of Faculty of Global Processes, joined to commemorate the first-time showing of the exhibition in Russia.

This congress, held for the fifth time this year under the auspices of UNESCO, aims to serve as a leading platform for the exchange of scientific knowledge and expertise and the development of international cooperation in the area of global studies. Initiated by MSU’s Faculty of Global Processes, it was organized in cooperation with some 17 institutions including the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) and the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO). Some 1,500 scientists and researchers from 50 countries attended.

The *Seeds of Hope* exhibition was created by the SGI and Earth Charter International in 2010 and has to date been shown in 38 countries and territories to encourage viewers to learn and reflect and to be inspired and empowered to make sustainable change.

International Forum on Localizing Response to Humanitarian Need

Colombo, Sri Lanka, October 16–19, 2017

Following inspiration from the World Humanitarian Summit, over 140 participants representing multiple local and global faith networks, faith-based organizations, aid agencies, policy makers, and government representatives participated in a forum to strengthen partnership and networks in localizing humanitarian response. The event took place in Colombo, Sri Lanka on October 16–19, 2017. It was co-organized by 16 NGOs including SGI, and sponsored by some aid agencies including the United States Agency for International



Development (USAID).

The forum gathered faith leaders to collaborate with humanitarian response and aid agencies to provide holistic support to faith leaders in training, finance and advocacy. It also highlighted the significance of the involvement of women across faith networks in all aspects of humanitarian work.

At the event more than 50 different panelists from all over the world including one from SGI, presented challenges and best practices on engagement, coming up with evidence-based recommendations to scale-up local partnerships in improving humanitarian aid.

The majority of the faith leaders and agencies present affirmed that during times of emergency, faith leaders are the first main responders, even if they are affected themselves. Participants are currently finalizing a “Call to Action” which will be used for future advocacy.

For more information click on the links below:

<https://jiliflc.com/2017/10/localising-response-humanitarian-aid/>

<https://lrf2017.org/>

SGI Representatives Participate in the 2017 Humanitarian Disarmament Forum and the UN General Assembly First Committee

New York, USA, October 14–15, 2017

SGI representatives joined the 2017 Humanitarian Disarmament Forum organized by Human Rights Watch, PAX and the Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic in New York City. The forum was convened in the margins of the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security, held at the UN Headquarters in New York from October 2 to November 2, to bring together various NGOs and global coalitions working to advance humanitarian disarmament and to protect civilians from the harmful effects of armed violence. Participants learned about the work of



each campaign and discussed various issues related to humanitarian disarmament, including how civil society actors are coping in the face of multiplying challenges, and how to utilize opportunities in these times, as exemplified by this year’s adoption of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). SGI representatives attended and discussed the importance of peace and disarmament education, especially in light of universalizing the TPNW.

Also, during the First Committee, SGI representatives observed the debates, attended the side events and supported ICAN’s efforts to encourage member states to sign and ratify the TPNW.

8th International Conference on Human Rights Education

Montreal, Canada, November 30–December 3, 2017

This conference was a forum for practitioners, policy-makers and academics to explore innovative educational solutions to

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8th International Conference
on Human Rights Education

November 30th to December 3rd 2017 · Montreal, Canada

global challenges. This three-and-a-half-day conference assembled 300 participants from all over the world for practical workshops and insightful sessions featuring the latest tools, knowledge and good practice in human rights education.

During the conference, SGI and the Organisation Internationale pour le Droit à l'Education et la Liberté d'Enseignement (OIDEI) held a workshop on the “Successes and Challenges in Promoting Human Rights Education: Can the impact of educational tools in non-formal settings be measured?”

The purpose of the workshop was to bring together different views and experiences, engaging participants in meaningful discussions to explore the impact of educational tools in promoting human rights education (HRE) in non-formal settings and whether this can be measured.



As one such educational tool, the exhibition *Transforming Lives: The Power of Human Rights Education*, which was launched at the UN in Geneva in March earlier this year, was displayed

during the conference. This exhibition was developed by SGI in partnership with HRE2020, the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning, and the platform of Member States with thanks to OHCHR.

UN Conference on Disarmament Issues in Hiroshima—Towards Realizing a World Free of Nuclear Weapons

Hiroshima, Japan, November 29–30, 2017

The 27th United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues was held in Hiroshima from November 29 to 30 under the theme “Towards Realizing a World Free of Nuclear Weapons—Paving the Way to Achieve the Common Goal.” The conference, organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, through its Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, in



cooperation with the Government of Japan and in partnership with the Prefecture of Hiroshima and the City of Hiroshima, brought together 60 representatives of governmental and intergovernmental organizations, as well as research institutes, academia and nongovernmental organizations from 12 countries to reflect on the prospects for a world free from nuclear weapons, taking into account recent and current developments and their impact in the lead-up to the 2020 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. Kazuo Ishiwatari, Chair of the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee and Kimiaki Kawai, Director of the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee, participated in the discussions during the conference.

Prior to the conference, on November 28, Izumi Nakamitsu, UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and Japanese NGOs had a discussion to reaffirm the importance of the role that civil society can play in raising public awareness to strengthen and realize broader support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in a more universalized way. Kimiaki Kawai joined the discussion as one of the speakers where he encouraged the UN to take a lead in debates on nuclear weapons and to put forward a new vision of security, one that is easily understood, robust, and appealing, based on the universal human desire to protect the things we treasure. We need to awaken people from the present nightmare of nuclear deterrence with the bright lights of a new vision.

Japanese NGOs Meet with the “Eminent Persons Group for Substantial Progress of Nuclear Disarmament” in Hiroshima

Hiroshima, Japan, November 27–28, 2017

The first meeting of the “Eminent Persons Group for Substantial Progress of Nuclear Disarmament” was held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan in Hiroshima from November 27 to 28. The meeting brought together 16 experts from Japan and abroad including nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states to examine potential ways in which Japan can serve as a bridge among nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states. The group is to prepare recommendations at the meeting and submit them to the 2020 NPT Preparatory Committee in 2018.



On the morning of November 28, the group had a discussion with Japanese NGOs. Following three powerful presentations from NGOs, they had active exchanges of views on the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and nuclear deterrence. Kimiaki Kawai, Director of the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee attended and made a statement in which he expected the group to put forward a new vision of security, one that was easily understood, robust, and appealing, based on the universal human desire to protect the things we treasure. He further stressed the necessity to foster a shared awareness that nuclear weapons in any hands are dangerous and wrong as a means of protecting the things and the people we treasure, and on this basis, to pursue the elimination of nuclear weapons as a shared global undertaking by all of humankind.

SGI Representative Speaks at the Meeting of Sant'Egidio

Tokyo, Japan, October 31, 2017

On October 31 an event calling for the abolition of the death penalty in Japan was held at the Italian Institute of Culture in Tokyo, sponsored by the Community of Sant'Egidio, a Christian lay movement based in Italy. The event was held with the theme, "To Open Paths of Peace for Building a Common Future" to raise public awareness against the death penalty.

Speakers included Alberto Quattrucci, Secretary of Sant'Egidio; Masaharu Harada, Founder of Ocean (an association of murder victims' relatives against the death penalty); Juan Masia from the Catholic Church; Shinohara Yoshinori, Director of Peace Building Department; Risho Koseikai; and Hideko Hakamada, sister of Iwao Hakamada, the world's longest-held death row inmate who was released on March 27, 2014 after 48 years in prison.

As the representative of SGI, Tamotsu Sugiyama, Vice President of Soka Gakkai, gave a speech to introduce how SGI considers and opposes the death penalty. He stated: "As the preceding presentations have made clear, the death penalty is an extreme form of punishment that takes human life. It is not only incompatible with the right to life, the most essential



of human rights, but also unacceptable for Buddhists, who uphold the dignity of life." He also strongly underlined the importance of human rights education: "As part of our efforts to raise awareness about human rights, the SGI has long worked to mainstream human rights education based on the Buddhist spirit of respecting the sanctity of life. "It is because we believe that the first step to countering and preventing human rights violations and abuses is to help raise awareness within individuals, that we promote human rights education which fosters values of respect, inclusion, nondiscrimination, participation, accountability and equality."

NGO Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) Held a Meeting in New York

New York, United States, September 28, 2017

On 28 September 2017 in New York, the NGO Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) held a meeting on the topic, “Peace and Security and the Role of Young Women: The Link between UNSCR 1325 and 2250” at the Church Center for the United Nations, which was cosponsored by the NGO CSW/NY Young Professionals. With standing room only, nearly 100 participants—a diverse and intergenerational group—attended the meeting. Ivy Gabbert of the SGI Office for UN Affairs and Co-chair of the NGO CSW/NY Young Professionals moderated and organized the event.



Ms. Gabbert shared how the topic of young women’s roles in peace and security was of interest as it is in alignment with the work of the SGI. Women and young people are the emphasis of all of SGI’s activities and SGI has a long-standing commitment to disarmament issues. She highlighted the efforts of the Women’s Peace Committee and the Young Women’s Conference on Peace and Culture in Japan to promote a culture of peace and women’s empowerment through educational projects.

Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, focused his talk on three areas where the role of young women are key, which are: in political participation and advocacy, in corporations for full equality in the workforce, and in the UN to appoint more women to the highest levels of decision-making.

Sophie Giscard D’Estaing, Peace and Security Policy Analyst for UN Women, pointed out that the Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security resolutions are overlapping and should work together, not in parallel. “Young people are the future” is a phrase often heard but one she urges us to challenge because youth are here and equally important.

SGI Peace News is a bimonthly publication highlighting the public education activities carried out by SGI. These activities help to raise awareness of issues such as nuclear disarmament,

human rights, gender equality, sustainable development, interfaith cooperation and humanitarian support.

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