

As a concerned individual, and based on his belief in our shared humanity, Daisaku Ikeda has contributed to building trust and human connections across historical divides created by the wounds of war or differences of ideology. He has put particular efforts into healing relations between Japan and its neighbors in Asia based on an honest view of history, often offering his own apologies for the suffering wrought by Japan's wartime aggression.

### **China–Japan friendship**

In 1968, as president of the Soka Gakkai, Ikeda made a historic speech calling for the normalization of relations between Japan and China in front of 20,000 youth in Tokyo. He was convinced that ending the isolation of China was the key to stability and peace in Asia. In December 1974, he met with then Premier Zhou Enlai, toward the end of the Chinese leader's life.

Ikeda pledged to do all in his power to build a bridge of friendship between the two countries, in order to heal the scars of war and reestablish the close ties enjoyed over thousands of years. Ikeda has visited China ten times, and initiated extensive programs of youth, cultural and educational exchange stretching over 30 years.

“I am always touched by the warm humanity of the people of China, which I regard as my spiritual home. There is a saying in your country: ‘When mingling with people, mingle with their hearts. When watering trees, water the roots.’ In the same way, the flower of friendship blossoms when attention is given to profound heart-to-heart ties—not merely to outward appearances of formality or etiquette.”

### **Russia–Japan friendship**

In September 1974, in the midst of the Cold War, Ikeda made his first visit to the Soviet Union, at the invitation of Moscow State University. On that trip he met with Premier Aleksei N. Kosygin. It was a time of great tension between China and the Soviet Union, and Ikeda had witnessed the Chinese people's fear of a Soviet attack on a visit there earlier that year.

Ikeda asked Kosygin whether the Soviet Union was intending to attack China. The premier responded that the Soviet Union had no intention of either attacking or isolating China. On a subsequent visit to China, Ikeda brought this message to the Chinese leadership, contributing to the easing of tensions between the two countries.

He has since supported numerous exchanges between Japan and Russia in the fields of culture and education, as well as the promotion of major exhibitions and other activities on the theme of peace.

“People criticized me, asking why a person of religion would want to visit a communist country. But I was determined to open that road. Together, we have transformed suspicion into trust, and fear into friendship. I wanted to transform a fixation with the past into a commitment to the future.”