

Toward a New Era of Value Creation

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On the occasion of the eightieth anniversary of the Soka Gakkai and the thirty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), I would like to share some thoughts on the most effective means of achieving a more peaceful world. But I would first like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt sympathies for all of the victims of the recent devastating earthquake that struck Haiti. I offer my prayers for all who have been affected and my hope that international society will mount a unified and coordinated effort for relief and reconstruction.

It was just one year ago that Barack Obama was inaugurated as president of the United States of America. Running under the banner of "Change," his candidacy and his election as the first African-American U.S. president were the focus of expectations of people throughout the world.

The ongoing global recession sparked by the collapse of the Lehman Brothers brokerage firm in the autumn of 2008 further fueled people's hopes that some message of change would issue from the United States. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, signed into law in the month after Obama's inauguration, attracted attention as it sought to generate new employment opportunities, in part through a stress on innovative energy policies.

The global financial system, which was on the verge of meltdown, has been stabilized to some extent thanks to the coordinated policy responses of various governments. This has resulted, however, in massive budget deficits, and the employment situation remains dire. The roots of the crisis are deep, and it would appear that a full recovery is still some way off. There are in fact concerns regarding the possibility of a "double-dip" recession such as was seen in the Great Depression eighty years ago.

Further, President Obama has signaled a potentially fundamental transformation in the status of nuclear weapons--the demonic product of modern scientific-technological civilization. In his speech in Prague, the Czech Republic, in April 2009, he spoke of the moral responsibility of the United States as the only country to have used nuclear weapons in war and called for a world without nuclear weapons. In doing so, he provided an important new impetus to long-deadlocked efforts for nuclear disarmament.

The abolition of nuclear weapons has long been an issue of overriding importance to me, as heir to the commitment of my mentor, second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda (1900-58). It is something I have stressed on many occasions, including in my meetings with intellectual and political leaders over the years. On September 8, 2009, I issued a proposal, "Building Global Solidarity Toward Nuclear Abolition," to commemorate my mentor's call some fifty years earlier for the elimination of these apocalyptic weapons.

Nuclear weapons embody the deepest negative impulses of the human heart woven through the history of our species. The work of abolishing them is laden with profound difficulties, and it is unrealistic to expect rapid or simple progress. As President Obama himself noted in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech:

The non-violence practiced by men like Gandhi and King may not have been practical or possible in every circumstance, but the love that they preached--their fundamental faith in human progress--that must always be the North Star that guides us on our journey. [\[1\]](#)

Indeed, as Gandhi noted, "Good travels at a snail's pace." [\[2\]](#) It is therefore vital to maintain an approach that is both flexible and persistent. It is important to avoid being too hasty in making judgments about individual policy decisions taken in the pursuit of larger objectives, allowing expectation to turn easily to disappointment. I hope that international society will take up these challenges, keeping the ideal clearly in view as we work to address each of the specific difficulties that reality presents.

An interregnum of values

I would like to shift now to an analysis of what I consider a deeper problem: the pessimism--or even nihilism--that pervades contemporary society.

Nihilism is typically associated with Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) declaration of the death of God. It should be noted that nihilism is not an exclusively European phenomenon, but also has multiple genealogies in Eastern thought. Here, however, I wish to use the term in reference to the pathology of civilization that hovers like a miasma over a human landscape made desolate by the painfully apparent contradictions of globalization. This trend is clearly visible in Japan and in the generally pessimistic tenor of discourse here, the cause of which is not, I believe, limited to the end of the era of strong and consistent economic growth.

The sense of decline is characterized by a pessimism and a nihilism that differs from the experience of people during the Great Depression of the 1930s, when socialism was at least seen as offering an alternative to the prevailing system. Today's pessimism would seem on the surface to be the opposite of the frenetic energy of an inflationary bubble, but it is in fact simply a different aspect of the same underlying phenomenon.

The French political scientist Emmanuel Todd has offered the following analysis of what he calls "the logical culmination" of finance-centered globalization: "While desiring to 'free the individual' from all the constraints of the collective, it has succeeded only in creating mediocrities who, trembling in terror, seek safety in the worship and hoarding of money." [3]

The flipside of mammonism is, in other words, nihilism. Aspects that would appear to be diametrically opposed are in fact the inevitable twins born of modern civilization. Both are the product of an era that might be termed an interregnum of values, in which no measure of worth other than the monetary is recognized. Even discussions of the negative aspects of globalization, such as poverty and income disparity, are cast solely in terms of monetary values, making them needlessly sterile and soulless.

Growing income disparities are an undeniable fact, and we cannot turn a blind eye to the kinds of tragedy, including crime and suicide, to which they give rise. I have long stressed that there is a clear political responsibility to ameliorate this. Legal and systemic measures to create and maintain a social safety net are a necessary expression of the ethical values, such as justice and fairness, on which any successful social order rests. But my deeper concern is that efforts to secure improvements to physical and tangible conditions respond only to the symptoms, when more fundamental, curative measures are required. To ensure the genuine and lasting effectiveness of our response, a spiritual undergirding--a fundamental reevaluation of our priorities--is necessary.

The basic orientation of modern civilization is to identify economic capacity--the ability to maximize profit and wealth--as the sole criterion of human worth. This chronic tendency of modern civilization and capitalism--driven by the limitless expansion and unleashing of desire--remains essentially uncorrected even after the massive and devastating experiment of Soviet-style communism. Almost forty years after The Club of Rome issued its stark warning *The Limits to Growth*, the time has surely come for humanity to learn from the bitter lessons of the current global downturn and acknowledge this underlying pathology.

We need to develop the awareness that the standard of values that judges human worth solely on the basis of economic capacity is what Todd calls the value system of mediocrities; or rather, that it represents the effective absence of values. We need to ask ourselves why there is such pervasive pessimism and nihilism in advanced industrial societies where the standard of living, judged on a strictly material basis, surpasses that of the monarchs and aristocrats of the past.

Reining in desire

The greatest driving force for the development of modern civilization has been science and technology. Yoshiharu Izumi is a scientist who has been exploring the relationship between religion, Buddhism in particular, and science. He writes: "Humanity has sought a stable and secure way of life, with religion serving as steering wheel and brake to guide and counterbalance the accelerator of desire that stokes the engine of intellect." [4]

Indeed, modern civilization and especially the system of modern capitalism was, as Max Weber (1864-1920) saw it, characterized by a way of life in which some degree of stability was secured through the functioning of Protestant ethics acting to direct and rein in otherwise unhindered desire. In other words, value-based questions--What is the purpose of hard work, of effort, of accumulation?--were an integral aspect of daily life. This lent a degree of balance to the human spirit and people's lives. When this steering wheel and brake cease to function, all that remains are the excesses of what Weber called "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart." [5] It could be said that what is today condemned as supercapitalism--uncontrolled avarice--represents the terminal phase of this process in which desire and intellect have broken entirely free of any ethical framework.

The credit bubble that gave rise to the current financial crisis was rooted in the expansion of the highly speculative market in derivatives, which were developed using cutting-edge financial engineering. One can only wonder if any larger questions of purpose or impact ever impinged on the consciousness of those who were passionately focused on turning the world's financial markets into a giant casino.

If the tendency of the engine of intellect--that is, science and technology--to run out of control is left unchecked, this can have truly fatal consequences for humanity. The horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki put an end to the faith in progress that had already been greatly shaken by the events of the first decades of the twentieth century. The nightmare unleashed through the development of nuclear weapons technologies demonstrates all too clearly the immense dangers arising from the interaction of cutting-edge knowledge, intellect and insatiable desire--including the desire to dominate others, which Buddhism terms the life condition of Anger.

In the dialogue that nuclear physicist and peace activist Joseph Rotblat (1908-2005) and I published together, he described the sense of despair that overwhelmed him on hearing that an atomic weapon had been used against Hiroshima. Indeed, few events have cast such dark shadows of nihilism--the obliteration of all values--over the human future.

Another threat of contemporary nihilism lies in the potential development of extreme forms of biotechnology, such as germline genetic engineering. Francis Fukuyama (*Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*) and Bill McKibben (*Enough: Staying Human in an Engineered Age*) are among those suggesting the realistic possibility of a "posthuman"

world in which the spiritual heritage that human beings have accumulated over the millennia--morality and religion, culture and art--will be rendered meaningless and without value.

Genetic engineering could, through subtle appeals to people's egotism (such as the desire for "perfection" in themselves and their progeny), reach an irretrievable level of development without our proper awareness. Thus, if nuclear weapons technology can be thought of as a threat to humankind's continued existence, germline manipulation can be seen as a challenge to our humanity, a threat to our fundamental integrity as human beings. And circling over both these technological threats is the dark shadow of nihilism, at times manifesting arrogant confidence, at times feigning cool indifference...

Science and technology divorced from the question of value is subject to no real control and contains the possibility of posing a deadly peril to human society. It is not surprising that, in an era where the engorgement of scientific knowledge may have already reached the point of no return, new attention is being accorded Martin Heidegger's (1889-1976) ideas regarding technology--that what is genuinely disturbing is not technology itself, but the grotesque inadequacy of our response to the challenges it presents.

The language and values of good

Writing in 1941, French philosopher Simone Weil (1909-43) lamented: "The essential characteristic of the first half of the twentieth century is the growing weakness, and almost the disappearance, of the idea of value." She goes on to cite Paul Valéry's (1871-1945) observation that an entire class of words, especially those which refer to good, had become degraded. "Words like virtue, nobility, honour, honesty, generosity, have become almost impossible to use or else they have acquired bastard meanings; language is no longer equipped for legitimately praising a man's character." Weil referred to this as "the enfeeblement of the sense of value." [6]

Weil's insights, like those of her contemporary philosopher Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973), embody enduring truths. We can easily and appropriately apply her description to our present situation. In fact, the ailment she describes has, if anything, grown more severe. War already represents the human pathology in its most concentrated form, and in the present period the use of weapons of mass destruction and the techniques of terrorism have made its violence almost entirely indiscriminate. Such indiscriminate violence represents a refusal to feel the moral sense of value that compels us to engage with people as unique and irreplaceable individuals.

"Soka" literally means "value creation," and the members of the Soka Gakkai International are determined to respond on the deepest level to the challenge of nihilism--the interregnum of values that presently prevails--and to restore those functions that would guide and restrain a runaway civilization. We consider this undertaking to be one of significance even within the greater context of human history.

Ours is a movement that seeks to dispel the clouds of nihilism in order to reveal the language and values of good that languish on the verge of extinction. It is a movement that works quietly to revive the human spirit and reawaken ordinary citizens, exhorting people to choose the good that is the fruit of self-mastery and resist the destructive pitfalls of evil. It is an attempt to realize a fundamental transformation in human priorities based on the idea that a change in the destiny of a single individual can change the destiny of all humankind, the key theme of my novel *The Human Revolution*.

Many commentators have accurately grasped the essence of our movement to create value and have shared their empathy and encouragement for the ideals aspired to by our publications such as the *Seikyo Shimbun* newspaper.

"Unswayed by the currents of the age, the *Seikyo Shimbun* espouses a clear philosophy, offering that which is most necessary for the current age." "The *Seikyo Shimbun* offers people a source of energy and happiness and continues to be widely read because it has stayed true to the perspectives that Japanese society should most value: peace, culture and education." "Tolstoy, Goethe and Hugo are all giants in the spiritual history of humankind. At a time when many are concerned about the decline of print culture, the *Seikyo Shimbun* is probably the only media outlet where the words of these giants appear with great regularity."

As these comments indicate, people of goodwill have high hopes for our movement and its capacity to break out of the current deadlock where pessimism and nihilism prevails.

The Kyrgyz author Chinghiz Aitmatov was a friend who passed away in 2008. He shared the following episode that conveys with a sensibility unique to an outstanding novelist the point I have been trying to make. A close aide to Mikhail Gorbachev when he was president of the Soviet Union, Aitmatov was a witness to perestroika. As a writer, he had long struggled against the censorship imposed by the political authorities. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, he was concerned about the emergence of a new and perhaps even more intimidating censorship in the form of commercialism. Aitmatov described the following episode:

A young journalist poured his entire fortune into establishing a new quality newspaper, which folded after the first ten issues. A friend of this young journalist took him to task, saying, "Your newspaper doesn't cover gossip articles or titillating rumors. It doesn't describe murders. Who do you think would buy such a paper?" [7]

Aitmatov compared this to the *Seikyo Shimbun*, saying it also has neither gossip nor fabrications, and maintains a high level of cultural content. And yet it continues to be read by several million people. This, he remarked, is an extraordinary accomplishment.

Genetic Engineering

Genetic engineering is the modification of a person's genotype, which makes it possible to add or delete specific genetic information in living cells. There are two major methods, somatic (which changes the genetic makeup of the cells that comprise the organs and tissues of a particular individual) and germline (which targets the genes in eggs or sperm, or the undifferentiated cells of an early embryo). Germline engineering affects every cell in the body of the resulting individual, and the changes are passed on to all future generations. While germline engineering is sometimes suggested as a way to prevent transmission of genetic diseases, the fact that it would permanently alter the genetic makeup of the human species makes its long-term impact impossible to predict. Scientific, religious and political leaders overwhelmingly oppose manipulation of the human germline.

It is our unchanging conviction that the source of energy to create value and open the door to a new era is to be found in religion. There is a need for the kind of religion that is compatible with and embraces the insights of science, but can serve to guide and restrain those technologies that, if misused, have the potential to wreak devastation on humankind.

Albert Einstein (1879-1955) famously declared that God does not play dice, and was firm in his rejection of the miraculous. In his last years, however, giving expression to an expansive sensibility that takes in the integrated and harmonious nature of the cosmos, he emphasized the idea of a cosmic religion or "cosmic religious feeling." [8] This overlaps with the idea of an "ultimate spiritual reality" [9] that the British historian Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975) and I explored in our dialogue together. To enter this realm in a tangible fashion requires a particular sensitivity, a philosophical and religious intuition that can relativize the concepts of space and time that had been the foundation for modern science.

But this sensitivity is by no means something possessed only by people of genius. If we can look beyond the diverse distractions of daily life--the noisy surface of an information society that appeals only to people's nerve endings--we will discover an innate capacity to appreciate genuine reality, to hear the heartbeat of that which is truly worth living for.

A focus on the here and now

I was struck by the following words from a recent interview with the Japanese literary critic Shozo Kajima: "Only the here and now is the true reality... We only need to be passionate about the here and now. If a person has aged in their feelings, they are old whatever their physical age." Regarding the tendency of modern civilization to seek abundance and happiness outside ourselves, Kajima urges us to "awaken to the richness of the unrealized capacities we already possess within." [10]

The phrase "here and now" is reminiscent of the proverb "Dig beneath your feet, there you will find a spring," and also of a statement by Einstein: "My eternity is now. I have only one interest: to fulfill my purpose here where I am." [11]

This shares a deep commonality with the worldview of Buddhism. Core concepts of Mahayana Buddhism--the simultaneity of cause and effect, the correspondence of the infinite past and the Latter Day of the Law, instantaneous enlightenment, attaining Buddhahood in one's present form--do not conform to the linear passage of physical or historical time, but can only be grasped through conceptions of space and time that are different from those that formed the basis for science in the modern period.

As Nietzsche noted in his essay "On the Use or Abuse of History for Life," the idea of a fixed past or future superimposed on the axis of physical or historical time is limited and cannot serve as a decisive factor in the way we live our lives. Such history, however factual, becomes foreign to us, inadequate to the realities of life.

In the record of Nichiren's (1222-82) detailed exegesis of the Lotus Sutra, we find the following: "In the word 'since' (*irai*), the element *i* (already, or having passed) refers to the past, and the element *rai* (coming) refers to the future. And the present is included in these two elements *i* and *rai*." [12] The present may seem to be nothing more than an instant in the flow from the past toward the future. But in this present instant is a genuine reality that comprises the infinite past and the limitless future. That reality is the font of life's deepest and most essential strength, and it is this strength that, while being constrained by the past, brings forth new hope for the future.

In this sense, now is the starting point for everything. The here and now is the foundation and pivot, the alpha and omega, of all aspects of human activity. If we lose sight of this and base ourselves in a virtual world, we end up the slaves of the very technologies which we ourselves created, oscillating uncontrollably between euphoric economic bubbles and despairing panics. Reality will be eroded and consumed by its virtual counterpart. A key function of religion is to help people replant their feet firmly in the here and now, enabling an out-of-control civilization to realize its needed course correction.

In the Buddhist tradition, the path of the bodhisattva is a way of life dedicated to social engagement. It is rooted in a sense of oneness with the living cosmos, while at the same time being committed to courageous action and the project of "living well" from now into the future.

Einstein, in calling for a cosmic religious feeling, manifested a universal conscience and character as he dedicated himself to activities for peace. In like manner, the pioneer who stands alone struggling to transform history is focused on the present moment, vitally engaged with the creation of value in that moment. Such a person is propelled by the irresistible impulses of conscience and, from within the rich spectrum of spatial-temporal possibilities comprised in the present moment, carefully and courageously selects and generates the language and values of good.

Just as there is no easy path to learning, there is no easy path to the realization of good. We have no choice but to root ourselves firmly in reality, deliberately taking on difficult challenges, ceaselessly training and forging ourselves in the smelting furnace of the soul. This is the direct path to the attainment of good.

As Marcel noted, there is always a tension between "the individuality of the circumstances and the universality of the law." He considered this tension "the crux, the spring" of value. [13] In the teachings of Buddhism we find the words, "the shallow is easy to embrace, but the profound is difficult. To discard the shallow and seek the profound is the way of a person of courage." [14] This phrase shines as an enduring guide for life.

To pass through this tension, this smelting furnace, without error requires the willingness to seek the depths, to strengthen and brace oneself, day by day, month after month. Here we find the tautness of heart that enables us to turn away from the natural human tendency to seek the easy way out, and instead, day by day, to pursue the ideal, training and elevating oneself.

Ultimately all things are impermanent; reality is an endless succession of transformations. There is an expression to the effect that if you have not seen someone for three days, await your next encounter with a sense of anticipation. In other words, a person who is growing and developing will show some sign of change in the course of just three days. Those who possess the spirit to seek out the depths will not overlook these changes, but will respond to them with acuity, never ceasing the advance toward value creation.

Such words as hope, courage, effort, friendship and kindness naturally describe the qualities required of those who seek to break through present difficulties toward a better future. This is why, in my lecture at Harvard University in 1991, I emphasized the importance of a process of contemplation, self-questioning and soul-searching to ensure that one's decisions are an expression of the inner stirrings and motivations of the conscience.

When people of faith succumb to the impulse to blindly rely on and give all responsibility to forces outside ourselves, religion indeed becomes a kind of opium. In such a state, it cannot support people in the pursuit of a way of life--described in Buddhism as the bodhisattva way--as proactive, self-reliant agents of change, transforming the era.

The smelting furnace of spiritual struggle

The Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955) used the term "the life of history" to describe this smelting furnace of ceaseless spiritual struggle, and offered the following vivid description:

I do not believe in the absolute determinism of history. On the contrary, I believe that all life, and consequently the life of history, is made up of simple moments, each of them relatively undetermined in respect of the previous one, so that in it reality hesitates, walks up and down, and is uncertain whether to decide for one or other of various possibilities. It is this metaphysical hesitancy which gives to everything living its unmistakable character of tremulous vibration. [\[15\]](#)

This "metaphysical hesitancy" should not be mistaken for lack of resolution. It indicates rather the source of energy to reject all fixed conceptions and to strive to find the good from within a state of tension marked by a "tremulous vibration."

One is reminded of the supplication of Brahma when he beseeched Shakyamuni to teach the Dharma. After attaining enlightenment, Shakyamuni was reluctant to teach the Dharma knowing as he did the profound, subtle and unfathomable nature of enlightenment. Brahma, Lord of the Universe in the Indian cosmology, appeared before him, entreating him to teach the Dharma for the sake of all those who suffer in anguish. There is a resonance between Shakyamuni's reluctance and what Ortega y Gasset describes as metaphysical hesitancy.

The ability to hesitate in this way may be compared to the strength required to pull back a bowstring to its fullest extent: the arrow that is released from it is certain to overcome all difficulties to strike the target of the good. The person who manifests this ability is able to resolve the dilemmas of life--flexibly, carefully and speedily--while consciously choosing the language and values of good. In this way it serves as a crux and spring of value creation.

In a poem I dedicated to young people a number of years ago, I urged them to carry out a process of revolutionizing themselves that was "healthy, peaceful and gradualistic" [\[16\]](#) and founded on the diverse ways of thinking of each individual.

The choices and decisions of people who aspire to the good will demonstrate immense variety depending on their respective here and now, what Marcel called "the individuality of the circumstances." But it is the spirit seeking the depths and striving to strengthen itself that enables us to carry out our determination, neither avoiding nor escaping those circumstances.

Victor Hugo's (1802-85) *Les Misérables* is a work I have loved since my youth. It opens with a heated argument between Bishop Myriel and a dying Jacobinist over the respective claims to justice of the Catholic Church and the French Revolution. When the bishop asks the Jacobinist what he thought of Marat [Jean-Paul Marat (1743-93)] applauding the guillotine, he responds by asking in turn what the bishop thought of Bossuet [Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704)] singing the Te Deum when the dragoons attacked the Protestants.

One can appreciate this as Hugo's inner confrontation and dialogue (contemplation, self-questioning and soul-searching) framed as a debate about historical facts. Hugo does not come down on either side, and this suggests the degree to which the question of justice--a difficult one that has vexed people since ancient times--was alive to him.

It is imperative that we always resist the temptation to abandon dialogue and adopt violence in its place. We must remain committed to the process of philosophical hesitation, enduring tension and the smelting furnace of ceaseless spiritual struggle; for this is the one place where our humanity can be truly forged.

The existence of others is the inescapable premise for a genuinely humane way of life. The process of patiently, persistently training and strengthening ourselves demands that we confront and engage in dialogue with others. Ortega y Gasset considered our willingness and capacity to coexist peacefully with those who are different from us as that which divides barbarity and civilization.

In my dialogue with former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, the man who dramatically restored debate and dialogue to the political culture of the Soviet Union, we concurred on the importance of learning to respect others, accustoming and accommodating ourselves to the reality of otherness. I earlier defined nihilism as a refusal to feel the moral sense of value that compels us to engage with people as unique and irreplaceable individuals. And it is for this reason that I believe that a revitalized sense of others and otherness holds the key to transforming an era characterized by the enfeeblement of the sense of value, and to restoring the language and values of good. The injunction to strengthen oneself, day by day, month after month, is thus an incomparable and unsurpassed encouragement to the work of overcoming nihilism and creating value.

A contributive way of life

I would like to take this opportunity to discuss several proposals that I believe can support efforts to resolve the current crises faced by the world and construct a new order of peace and coexistence for the twenty-first century.

The global economic crisis has had a severe impact on the lives of citizens in many countries. There is also concern that one of its outcomes will be a slowing or scaling back of international cooperative efforts to respond to the complex array of global issues that confront us, including poverty and environmental destruction. We must avoid a vicious cycle in which crisis gives rise to pessimism, which in turn exacerbates crisis.

While efforts to create an international framework for reducing greenhouse gases past 2013 have stalled, this does not mean that there is a complete absence of hopeful developments. For example, the tree planting campaign initiated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2006 has, as of the end of 2009, resulted in the planting of some 7.4 billion trees worldwide. This effort has seen the participation of millions of citizens, from elementary schoolchildren to heads of state; the total number of newly planted trees comes to more than one tree per inhabitant of Earth.

Additionally, in 2008, UNEP launched the Climate Neutral Network, whose members seek to achieve zero net emissions of greenhouse gases. A number of national and local governments as well as corporations, NGOs, universities and educational institutions are participating in this network. As these examples demonstrate, while it may be true that intergovernmental negotiations have been largely deadlocked, continued efforts are being made to achieve breakthroughs with approaches based on new forms of international cooperation and driven by the proactive engagement of individuals and organizations.

In terms of finding a path toward the resolution of global issues, the year 2010 will be a critical one, with a number of important meetings scheduled, including the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in May and the special summit in September on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We must remember that there is always a way, a path to the peak of even the most towering and forbidding mountain. Even when a sheer rock face looms before us, we should refuse to be disheartened, but instead continue the patient search for a way forward. In this sense, what is most strongly required of us is the imagination that can appreciate the present crises as an opportunity to fundamentally transform the direction of history. By mustering the force of inner will and determination we can convert challenges into the fuel for positive change.

When the Soka Gakkai was founded in 1930, Japan and the world were shuddering under the impact of the financial panic of the previous year. People were afflicted by a deepening sense of dread and unease. Writing at that time, the founder of the organization, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944), called for a transition from a dependent or even an independent way of life to what he called a contributive way of life. He rejected a passive, dependent way of life in which one is swayed by and at the mercy of one's surroundings and the conditions of the times. He likewise rejected a way of life in which we are capable of looking out for our own needs but remain indifferent to the sufferings of others.

He urged, instead, a contributive way of life as described by the Buddhist maxim that when we light a lantern for others, our own way forward is lit. The source of illumination needed to dispel the chaos and darkness of the age is to be found in actions that bring forth our own inner light through committed action on behalf of others.

The second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda (1900-58), as heir to Makiguchi's spirit, declared: "I wish to see the word 'misery' no longer used to describe the world, any country, any individual." [\[17\]](#) He put this conviction into practice through his efforts dedicated to peace and people's happiness and to the construction of popular solidarity rooted in a philosophy of respect for the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person.

Surveying the challenges that confront contemporary global society, I am convinced that nothing is more crucial than an essential reorientation of our way of life based on a commitment to the welfare of all of humankind and the entire planet, such as Makiguchi and Toda called for. Rather than stand to one side and ponder how the future might develop, we must focus on what each of us can do at this critical moment, the role each of us can choose to play in changing the direction of history. We must strive to make a proactive, contributive way of life the prevailing spirit of the new era.

On the basis of this recognition, I would like to offer several concrete policy proposals focused on two main areas. The first regards nuclear weapons, which continue to threaten humankind as the ultimate embodiment of a cruel and blatant dismissal of the needs and welfare of others. The second is the structural distortions of global society where poverty and other threats continue to undermine the human dignity of vast numbers of people.

Toward a world without nuclear weapons

In the proposal I wrote in September 2009, I offered a five-part plan for laying the foundation for a world free from nuclear weapons, including the promotion of various disarmament efforts and making the transition to security arrangements that are not reliant on nuclear weapons. At the same time, I reaffirmed my long-standing conviction that if we are to put the era of nuclear terror behind us, we must struggle against the real "enemy." That enemy is not nuclear weapons *per se*, nor is it the states that possess or develop them. The real enemy that we must confront is the ways of thinking that justify nuclear weapons--the readiness to annihilate others when they are seen as a threat or as a hindrance to the realization of our objectives.

My proposals should be considered as a series of steps to overcome and transform the thinking that justifies nuclear weapons and to strengthen the momentum toward their abolition.

The first of these is to work, based on the existing NPT system, to expand the frameworks defining a clear legal obligation not to use nuclear weapons, in this way laying the institutional foundations for reducing their role in national security.

The second is to include the threat or use of nuclear weapons among the war crimes falling under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC), further clarifying the norm that nuclear weapons are indeed weapons that must never be used.

The third is to create a system, based on the United Nations Charter, for the General Assembly and the Security Council to work together for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

The NPT Review Conference

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is widely considered to be the foundation of multilateral nonproliferation efforts. It consists of three "pillars"--nonproliferation, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The Treaty stipulates the holding of a Review Conference of states parties to the NPT every five years. The perceived failure of the nuclear-weapon states to achieve disarmament and proliferation challenges by states both part of and outside the NPT framework have put its effectiveness in jeopardy; the 2005 Review Conference failed to reach any substantive agreement. The Review Conference in May 2010 is the focus of strong expectations for renewed momentum on all fronts. Key topics are likely to include: emerging proliferation challenges; reducing existing nuclear arsenals; promoting universal adherence to the NPT and its Additional Protocols; consequences for treaty violations and withdrawal; nuclear-weapon-free zones; nuclear energy.

None of these proposals will be easy to implement, but all of them build on existing institutional foundations. They are by no means unreachable goals. It is my earnest wish that the NPT Review Conference to be held in May will initiate movement toward these goals and that they can be implemented within five years. Such efforts should culminate in a nuclear abolition summit in 2015--held in Hiroshima and Nagasaki seventy years after the nuclear attacks that devastated these two cities--which would effectively signal the end of the era of nuclear weapons.

Expanding frameworks for non-use of nuclear weapons

To date, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZ) has represented an effort to fill the gap in the legal framework left by the absence of any treaty or convention providing a blanket prohibition against the use of nuclear weapons. In 2009, NWFZ treaties entered into force in Central Asia and Africa. These followed similar agreements covering Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific and Southeast Asia. The decision by so many governments to eliminate nuclear weapons from so many regions around the world is truly significant.

Although the preamble to the NPT, which entered into force forty years ago, calls on signatories to "make every effort to avert the danger of such a war and to take measures to safeguard the security of peoples," [\[18\]](#) it is clear that the nuclear-weapon states have not fulfilled that obligation.

The NPT does not, of course, accord these countries an open-ended right to possess nuclear weapons. Despite this, their continued adherence to the doctrine of nuclear deterrence has had the effect of encouraging both "vertical proliferation" (expanded and enhanced nuclear arsenals within nuclear-weapon states) and "horizontal proliferation" (the spread of nuclear technologies to other states and entities). The real-world effect has been to shake and undermine the foundations of the NPT regime itself.

The time has come for the nuclear-weapon states to develop a shared vision of a world without nuclear weapons and to break free from the spell of deterrence--the illusory belief that security can somehow be realized through threats of mutual destruction and a balance of terror. A new kind of thinking is needed, one based on working together to reduce threats and creating ever-expanding circles of physical and psychological security until these embrace the entire world.

As evidence of the nuclear-weapon states' genuine resolve to move beyond deterrence, I urge them to undertake the following three commitments at the 2010 NPT Review Conference and to work to fully implement them by 2015.

1. To reach a legally binding agreement to extend negative security assurances--the undertaking not to use nuclear weapons against any of the non-nuclear-weapon states fulfilling their obligations under the NPT.
2. To initiate negotiation on a treaty codifying the promise not to use nuclear weapons against each other.
3. Where nuclear-weapon-free zones have yet to be established, and as a bridging measure toward their establishment, to take steps to declare them nuclear non-use regions.

I have no intention of underestimating the difficulties that lie in the way of realizing these commitments, especially the second and third. But it is important to stress that these are political decisions that the nuclear-weapon states can take now while maintaining their current status as possessors of nuclear weapons.

Regarding pledges of mutual non-use, even an agreement limited to the United States and Russia would be a watershed event that would produce a major reduction in perceived threats, from which alliance partners would equally benefit. It would also provide an opening for reviewing the extraterritorial deployment of warheads and missile defense programs as steps toward the gradual dismantling of the nuclear umbrella.

As demonstrated in the final report of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, a joint initiative of the Australian and Japanese governments, issued in December 2009, there are increasing calls from within countries living under a nuclear umbrella for a review of traditional nuclear doctrine.

Among the benefits of establishing declared nuclear non-use regions would be to encourage progress toward global denuclearization and a comprehensive system to prevent the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction and forestall the dire possibility of nuclear terrorism. The aim would be to transform the confrontational stance prevailing in certain regions--including those where the nuclear-weapon states or their allies are present--of meeting threat with threat. What should be encouraged instead is the approach of mutual threat reduction exemplified by the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program instituted between the United States and the states of the former Soviet Union in the wake of the Cold War.

Regrettably, the NPT in its current form does not include provisions for reducing threats and offering mutual assurances that can enhance confidence. If progress can be made on negotiations toward these goals on a regional basis, it will make even more salient the physical and psychological security offered by participation in disarmament frameworks, as opposed to the further deepening of isolation on the outside. This will in turn reduce motivations to develop or acquire nuclear weapons.

If, through these systems, expanding circles of physical and psychological security can be created to encompass not only countries relying on the nuclear umbrellas of nuclear-weapon states, but also North Korea and Iran, as well as countries such as India, Pakistan and Israel that are currently not part of the NPT framework, this would represent a major breakthrough toward the goal of global denuclearization.

The list of treaties that should ideally be ratified by countries within a declared nuclear non-use region would include: the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Nuclear Terrorism Convention, the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Treaty. Looking forward, the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty should be added to this list when it is finalized.

In these efforts, a multilayered approach is required. As U.S. President John F. Kennedy (1917-63) stated: "There is no single, simple key to this peace--no grand or magic formula to be adopted by one or two powers. Genuine peace must be the product of many nations, the sum of many acts." [\[19\]](#)

In the proposal I issued last September, I called for all the countries currently engaged in the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear program--China, Japan, North Korea, Russia, South Korea and the United States--to declare Northeast Asia a nuclear non-use region as a step toward the denuclearization of the region including, of course, the abandonment of North Korea's nuclear weapons program. I strongly hope that discussions will be initiated toward the establishment of such systems in regions like the Middle East and South Asia where tensions have long run high.

Clarifying the illegality of the use of nuclear weapons

My second proposal regards establishing norms that make explicit the illegality of the use of nuclear weapons.

To date, treaties have been established comprehensively banning the development and manufacture, possession and stockpiling, transfer or acquisition of biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction. The 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibiting the use of these weapons was adopted in light of the enormous suffering wrought by the use of poison gas in World War I and represented an important step toward these comprehensive bans.

The Protocol notes the condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by international public opinion, declaring its prohibition to be "universally accepted as a part of International Law, binding alike the conscience and the practice of nations." [\[20\]](#) The Protocol stipulates a similar prohibition on the use of biological weapons.

Today, the thought of the possession, much less the use, of chemical or biological weapons by any state inspires widespread revulsion in the international community; the dishonor associated with them has become firmly established. We need to give concrete form to a similar recognition regarding nuclear weapons, which are undoubtedly the most inhumane of all.

At the annual conference of United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) NGOs held in September 2009 in Mexico City, which SGI representatives attended, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated that "nuclear weapons are immoral and should not be accorded any military value." [\[21\]](#)

The time has come for those in positions of leadership to acknowledge that nuclear weapons are abhorrent and militarily useless.

As the course of events leading up to the comprehensive bans on chemical and biological weapons demonstrates, the first step toward bringing the era of nuclear weapons to a decisive close must be the establishment of norms prohibiting their use.

More than half a century ago, in September 1957, my mentor Josei Toda issued a declaration condemning nuclear weapons as an absolute evil never to be used under any circumstance. In the years that followed, the UN General Assembly adopted a series of resolutions declaring their use a crime against humanity and civilization. And yet, a clear legal norm in this regard has yet to be established.

In 1996, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an Advisory Opinion on the threat or use of nuclear weapons: "the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to ... the principles and rules of humanitarian law." The court, however, refrained from offering its opinion regarding the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons "in an extreme circumstance of self-defence, in which the very survival of a State would be at stake." [22] So long as this critical question remains unresolved, it will be possible to develop justifications for the use of nuclear weapons, and this is why we must clearly establish the norms that will render nuclear weapons truly unusable.

Judge Christopher Weeramantry, president of the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms, was one of the judges participating in the case. He issued a separate opinion expressing his view that "the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is illegal *in any circumstances whatsoever*." [23] In his book *Universalising International Law*, he emphasizes that reflecting the voices and views of ordinary citizens contributes to making international law more universal and points out the importance of "[t]he views of peoples as constituting *opinio juris*." [24]

Looking back on the history of nuclear weapons, we can see that when situations of crisis and extreme danger arose, they were averted and breakthroughs were achieved, and the idea that nuclear weapons can be used was steadily eroded. This was realized through the synergistic interaction of the practical and moral restraint exercised by political leaders and the growing weight of international public opinion that any repetition of the horrors of nuclear weapons use must be avoided at all costs.

For example, the first restriction on nuclear weapons development, the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty, was adopted through the efforts of U.S. and Soviet leaders who had together peered into the abyss of nuclear war during the Cuban Missile Crisis and against the backdrop of the citizens movement to "ban the bomb" led by Linus Pauling (1901-94) and other scientists.

Likewise, the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the first agreement to actually reduce the number of nuclear weapons, was adopted through a series of U.S.-Soviet summit meetings and had as its backdrop the shock of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor disaster. Another crucial factor behind this redirection of policy was the vocal public opposition to the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe in the 1980s.

While these steps may represent only limited progress in and of themselves, they reflect the steadily deepening awareness within international society that nuclear weapons must never be used and that steps must be taken to contain the threat they pose. This fact is all the more striking if we recall that in the immediate aftermath of World War II nuclear weapons were considered to be no more than extremely destructive conventional weapons whose eventual use was widely considered inevitable.

No matter how great the divide between our ideals and reality may be, there is no need to give up hope or accept this with resignation. Instead, the ordinary citizens of the world need to come together to create a new reality. The prohibitions on land mines and cluster weapons that have been realized in recent years are the fruit of such solidarity.

Last year I called for a movement in support of a "declaration for nuclear abolition by the world's people" that could be jointly promoted by individuals, organizations, spiritual and religious groups, universities and research institutions, as well as agencies within the UN system.

In conjunction with this, I call on this occasion for a movement to amend the Statute of the International Criminal Court to define the use of nuclear weapons as a war crime.

We should embrace the goal of making the prohibition of nuclear weapons the shared norm and aspiration of all humankind by 2015, the seventieth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We must use the establishment of this norm to clear the way toward the complete abolition of nuclear weapons--the fervent desire of the survivors of the nuclear attacks and people the world over.

Many states participating in the negotiations leading up to the establishment of the ICC in 1998 urged that the use of nuclear weapons be included as a war crime falling under the jurisdiction of the court. However, this was not reflected in the final language of the Rome Statute as it was adopted. I urged reconsideration of this in the peace proposal I wrote the following year. In November 2009, at the eighth session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Mexico proposed this amendment to the Statute, and a working group has been established to consider this, together with other revisions. I welcome this development and the important opportunities it presents.

The states that are not party to the ICC, especially nuclear-weapon states, should be invited to participate in the debates on this question as observers. What is important is for the representatives of as many governments as possible to confront, through a process of earnest debate, the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons and the intolerable threat they pose. The objective of the proposed revision is obviously not to punish the actual use of nuclear weapons but to establish a clear norm that such use is always and under any circumstance unacceptable.

For the members of the SGI, the declaration made by second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda calling for the prohibition of nuclear weapons remains our enduring source of inspiration. Drawing from this, we have, for the past half-century, continued to stress the horrors of nuclear weapons, raising public awareness and generating support for their abolition. In September 2007, on the fiftieth anniversary of Toda's declaration, the SGI launched the People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition; we have also been

working with the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) promoted by International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) to encourage adoption of a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC) comprehensively banning these weapons. I am convinced that amending the Statute of the ICC to make the use of nuclear weapons a war crime would spark further momentum toward the adoption of an NWC.

From the start of 2010, the members of the Soka Gakkai in Japan, in particular the youth membership, have been engaged in grassroots dialogue to deepen awareness among their peers of the nuclear issue; they have also been collecting signatures in support of an NWC to be presented to the NPT Review Conference in May. It is the essential nature of youth to remain undeterred by any difficulty, to resist the overwhelming currents of reality and to live committed to the realization of the highest ideals. If the key to the prohibition of nuclear weapons lies in mustering an overwhelming expression of popular will, it is in the solidarity of young people dedicated to this cause that the energy to transform the age will be found.

To date, the exhibition "From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace: Transforming the Human Spirit" created by the SGI in 2007 has been held in fifty cities in twenty-two countries. We have also produced a five-language DVD documenting the experiences of atomic bomb survivors, "Testimonies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Women Speak Out for Peace." Determined to fulfill the mission bequeathed to us by Josei Toda, we will continue to use these educational tools as vehicles for creating an irresistible tide of popular energy for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons.

Using Article 26 to advance disarmament

The third major theme I would like to discuss regards collaborative efforts by the UN General Assembly and the Security Council for nuclear abolition, based on the United Nations Charter.

Presently, the United States and Russia are engaged in negotiations toward a new nuclear disarmament treaty to replace the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) 1, which technically expired last year. Even the most ambitious reductions being negotiated between the two countries, however, would still leave an enormous number of nuclear warheads on Earth.

In order to effectively advance nuclear weapons reductions, it is essential to expand the nuclear disarmament framework beyond these two countries, to include all states that possess nuclear weapons. To this end, I would like to propose a process for developing and implementing a roadmap toward a world free of nuclear weapons based on the United Nations Charter, which all the relevant governments are pledged to uphold.

Article 11 of the UN Charter states that the General Assembly "may consider the general principles of co-operation in the maintenance of international peace and security, including the principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments, and may make recommendations with regard to such principles to the Members or to the Security Council or to both."

Further, Article 26 clearly states that the Security Council has responsibility for formulating plans for a system for the regulation of armaments in order to "promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources...."

To date, the General Assembly has, based on Article 11, engaged actively in questions of disarmament. In contrast, the Security Council has failed to fulfill this role, leaving Article 26 essentially dormant for all these years. This is one of the reasons why the Security Council Summit on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament held last September was so significant. In order to fulfill the commitment made at that time to "create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons," [\[25\]](#) the Security Council--whose five permanent members are all nuclear-weapon states--should take the lead in establishing a venue for multilateral disarmament negotiations through, for example, a series of summit meetings with the participation of the UN Secretary-General.

One action that could be taken by the General Assembly would be to build on the accumulated record of resolutions dedicated to the goal of nuclear weapons abolition. The General Assembly could start issuing, on an annual basis, recommendations to the Security Council urging it to fulfill its responsibility by achieving a specified minimum reduction of nuclear weapons. To strengthen the moral authority of this recommendation, it could be accompanied by reports by states on actions they have taken proactively toward reducing tensions and promoting disarmament.

It goes without saying that ultimate responsibility for abolishing nuclear weapons lies with the nuclear-weapon states. But there is no need for the non-nuclear-weapon states to wait passively for arms reduction negotiations to be completed. They can, through their own actions, generate pressure for abolition in order to bring about its more speedy realization. Such efforts would clearly be in line with the path set out by the ICJ's Advisory Opinion that "any realistic search for general and complete disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, necessitates the co-operation of all States." [\[26\]](#)

Further, the General Assembly, by expressing through these resolutions the will of international society for nuclear disarmament, can encourage ambitious efforts by various countries to reduce tensions. This could in turn become, in the words of Costa Rica's 2008 call for the Security Council to establish a system for the regulation of armaments based on Article 26, a means "to overcome the vicious armaments race that seems to be gaining momentum in several regions of the world, competing with the prioritization of social expenditure and the international agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and negatively affecting human security." [\[27\]](#)

In an era when all societies must come together to respond to the common challenges facing humankind, such as poverty and environmental destruction, military spending has absorbed far too much of the world's limited human and economic resources.

Nuclear weapons, in particular, are a fundamental evil that cannot resolve in any way the complex of global issues, but only exacerbate them.

Jayantha Dhanapala, president of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, and Patricia Lewis, deputy director of the Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, are both internationally renowned experts on disarmament issues. In a jointly written preface to a United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) report, they urge that in any discussion of disarmament, whether it concerns small arms or weapons of mass destruction, the human security aspect must be given first priority. "We need to mainstream disarmament to put it back in its rightful place: at the core of our thinking on people-centred security. Disarmament is humanitarian action." [\[28\]](#)

Based on this principle, I strongly urge that all efforts be made to fully implement Article 26 of the United Nations Charter so that the Security Council fulfills its disarmament obligations, strengthening impetus toward nuclear abolition and the demilitarization of our planet.

As a country that experienced nuclear attack, Japan has for more than a decade sponsored General Assembly resolutions calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Japan also espouses the three non-nuclear principles (not possessing, not producing and not permitting the introduction of nuclear weapons into its territory) as well as three principles regarding weapons exports. Japan should pledge its firm adherence to these two sets of principles as it takes the lead in mustering global public opinion for nuclear abolition.

In November of last year, Japan and the United States issued a joint statement declaring their intent to work actively to create the conditions for the achievement of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Japan will serve as a member of the Security Council this year, and should take this opportunity to strongly encourage the United States and other nuclear-weapon states to make progress on disarmament. In this and other ways, Japan has a unique duty and responsibility to work for the realization of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Toward an era of human dignity

Next I would like to discuss steps toward the resolution of the structural distortions of global society that threaten human dignity and have been brought to the fore by the current economic crisis.

Last year, there was a sharp slowdown in economic growth in developing countries; as a whole, the global economy contracted for the first time since World War II. The impact on the more vulnerable members of society has been particularly severe. There are growing concerns that new humanitarian crises may arise in different parts of the world unless targeted assistance addressing the needs of these populations is provided.

I have long stressed the crucial need for the development of international safety nets to safeguard the lives and dignity of people and to make human security a robust reality. At the same time, I have advocated the empowerment of individuals as a long-term response. Premised on this, I would here like to offer concrete proposals on employment, on empowering women and on children.

Work: A source of dignity

First, I urge governments to make efforts to address unemployment and to expand employment opportunities, in particular for young people. The international community as a whole must make efforts to help stabilize employment in the developing world in accordance with the Global Jobs Pact adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in June 2009.

Global unemployment in 2009 is said to have reached at least 219 million, the highest level ever on record. It is important that we direct our gaze beyond this staggering figure to the innumerable individual tragedies it represents. There is a clear political obligation to continue to take measures to relieve the insecurity and poverty that afflict wide sectors of society.

Young people, in particular, can be deeply affected if they are unable to find work or abruptly lose their jobs soon after joining the workforce. In addition to financial difficulty, they can be scarred with feelings of lack of worth and of insecurity concerning the future in such a way that can even undermine the will to live. At the same time, human dignity is gravely threatened when individuals are employed under inhumane or degrading conditions, or if lack of job security makes it impossible to plan realistically for the future.

Based on the conviction that "labour is not a commodity" and that "work must be a source of dignity," [\[29\]](#) the ILO has advocated the concept of decent work for all. The leaders of the G20, gathering for the Pittsburgh Summit in September 2009, fully endorsed this: "We cannot rest until the global economy is restored to full health, and hard-working families the world over can find decent jobs." [\[30\]](#) All measures must be taken to avoid the kind of sustained and deep economic contraction that followed the 1929 financial panic, in which ordinary people were left defenseless and society was thrown into ever-deepening turmoil.

Governments must take care to avoid prematurely terminating assistance initiatives specifically formulated in the face of the current economic crisis. As the ILO warns, this could delay the restoration of the employment market for years and stunt the fledgling economic recovery. It is therefore essential that governments continue to develop well-coordinated measures to expand employment, in line with the Global Jobs Pact.

Here I would like to propose the establishment of a task force dedicated to promoting decent work and the Global Jobs Pact under the G20 umbrella, which could be done at the G20 labor ministers' meeting scheduled for later this year. In this way, the G20 should take responsibility to be the driving force for global employment recovery, taking committed action until people are able to palpably sense that the crisis has passed.

Women: Builders of a better future

My second proposal focuses on the promotion of education for girls, which is vital for many reasons and also key to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that seek to greatly reduce the numbers of people suffering from poverty and hunger but whose attainment by the target date of 2015 is in serious doubt.

Many developing countries have been particularly hard hit by the current economic crisis, for which they bear little direct responsibility. It has not only undermined efforts to combat poverty, but also pushed people who were on the brink of poverty over the edge. Active support on the part of the developed world has become even more indispensable than ever, as expressed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has called for a final push toward achieving the MDGs by 2015. [\[31\]](#)

An MDG summit is scheduled for September. This must be seized upon as an opportunity to renew frameworks of international cooperation and redouble our efforts toward an era that enables all people to enjoy their dignity and realize their full potential.

I would like to stress the importance of girls' education and its crucial impact on all aspects of human development. All the objectives of the MDGs, such as alleviating poverty and hunger, involve and affect women. In this sense, gender equality and the empowerment of women hold the key to regaining momentum toward the achievement of those goals.

Children whose mothers completed primary education have twice the chance of survival beyond age five, and are more likely to be better nourished and go to school. Thus the education received by women can be a major factor in ending the generational cycle of poverty. Further, countries that have invested in girls' education over the long term have consistently shown higher levels of economic development.

Empowering a girl through education will lead to a brighter future for herself, her family and her children, eventually permeating society as a whole with the light of hope. Education indeed has such potential.

Primary school enrollment for girls has shown remarkable improvement through efforts such as the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative led by UNICEF. Looking ahead toward 2015, we should strive to create the conditions for more girls to be able to access secondary or higher levels of education.

Here I would like to propose an internationally administered fund dedicated to realizing a better future for women, in which a portion of developing countries' debts is forgiven and the equivalent amount allocated to girls' education.

Women face many challenges and threats. Broader opportunities for education can empower them to stand up as self-reliant actors, able to break through crises and redirect their lives and societies toward the better future they envision. Planting the seeds of empowerment now will make this a reality.

One hundred years ago, when the social standing of women in Japan was extremely low, the founding president of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, worked passionately to expand advanced educational opportunities for women out of the belief that it is they who will build a better society. He established a program that offered correspondence education to women who were unable to receive a secondary education after graduating from primary school, compiling learning materials and editing a related periodical. He was also instrumental in establishing a facility that offered free classes to women with limited financial resources to learn sewing and embroidery, skills that constituted a major element in Japanese girls' education at the time. It was as heir to his spirit that I created the correspondence programs at Soka University and founded Soka Women's College.

Women play a pivotal role in the SGI's global movement for peace. The exhibition "Women and a Culture of Peace" was created by the Women's Peace Committee of the Soka Gakkai in Japan in collaboration with peace scholar Elise Boulding, and forums on a culture of peace have been held to help raise awareness in many local communities. The message underlying these efforts is that women are the builders of peace; this represents a translation of Makiguchi's beliefs into contemporary contexts.

At the same time, these activities share the spirit of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted ten years ago in October 2000. The significance of the resolution lies above all in the fact that it was a declaration to the world at the threshold of the twenty-first century that women's involvement is essential if lasting peace is to be realized. I have recently had the privilege of exchanging views on this with former UN Under-Secretary-General Anwarul K. Chowdhury, who worked tirelessly for its adoption. Ambassador Chowdhury also emphasized that women's engagement enables a culture of peace to take deeper root.

In September 2009, in a reform designed to enhance overall effectiveness, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to merge four agencies and offices dealing with issues concerning women--the UN Development Fund for Women, the Division for

Resolution 1325

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security was unanimously adopted on October 31, 2000. This was the first time the Security Council addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women, recognizing the undervalued and underutilized contributions of women in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The resolution stresses the importance of the equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Urging an increase in the participation of women in all United Nations peace and security efforts, it also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse in armed conflicts.

the Advancement of Women, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women--into a new high-profile entity dedicated to gender equality.

It is my hope that this new body will include among its core activities monitoring implementation of Resolution 1325, together with the promotion of women's empowerment, including of course education for girls.

The degree to which the spirit of Resolution 1325 has taken root is clearly reflected in women's participation in peace processes. On the one hand, the UN Peacebuilding Commission was guided by Resolution 1325 in its reconstruction work in Burundi and Sierra Leone. Worldwide, however, women still make up less than 2 percent of the signatories of peace agreements and only 7 percent of the peace negotiators. [\[32\]](#)

This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, an international standard for policies related to women adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, as well as the tenth anniversary of Resolution 1325. It is important to make 2010 a breakthrough year, with significant progress toward the further empowerment of women on a global scale. To this end, I hope that more countries will join the Friends of 1325, an ad-hoc group of UN member states actively working for the implementation of the resolution. At this and other forums, there must be earnest debate on how best to enhance women's participation in peacebuilding processes.

Children: Humanity's shared treasure

My third proposal is aimed at protecting the lives and living conditions of children and solidifying a foundation for the twenty-first century to be a century of peace and coexistence.

In both the developed and developing worlds, it is children who are forced to pay the highest price when their societies face a crisis. With economies falling into recession and both national and family budgets hit hard by the current crisis, there are concerns over the increasing numbers of children who are denied access to adequate nutrition and health care or are forced to quit school in order to work.

Therefore I would like to suggest that schools should function as a refuge to protect children from various threats--as strongholds of human security--and become a venue for fostering children as protagonists of a new culture of peace.

In 1995, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the Global School Health Initiative to strengthen health promotion through schools. This approach has been carried over into the FRESH (Focusing Resources on Effective School Health) framework, launched in 2000 as a partnership of WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank. FRESH aims to improve the learning environment by teaching life skills needed to establish lifelong healthy practices, providing nutritious school meals, etc.

School meal programs are a crucial safeguard for children's health and future, as the experience of the World Food Programme has proved over more than four decades. UNICEF has advocated child-friendly schools and the building of classrooms that can withstand earthquakes and storms so that schools serve as a refuge in times of crisis where children can recover a sense of normalcy and their hearts can begin to heal.

I would like to propose that these and other school-focused efforts and experiences be built upon and expanded into a program that makes schools centers for promoting human security and building a culture of peace.

Emphasis has been placed in recent years on empowering children as agents of change rather than simply affording them protection, as important as that is. We should create an environment that enables children, who will shape the next generation, to initiate waves of change, transforming and breaking the historical cycles of human suffering and tragedy.

The year 2010 will be the last year of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. Global efforts to promote a culture of peace should continue beyond this year, with schools serving as focal points for this. The Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, adopted by the General Assembly in 1999, calls on all relevant actors to: "Ensure that children, from an early age, benefit from education on the values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life to enable them to resolve any dispute peacefully and in a spirit of respect for human dignity and of tolerance and non-discrimination." [\[33\]](#)

I would like to urge that we use this as a guideline as we foster in children the skills needed to deal with threats to life and dignity, as well as the spirit of resolving issues through dialogue rather than violence. Such efforts should involve all the places where children learn--home, school and the wider community. We must establish the means by which children develop into individuals who can be effective advocates for their own rights and dignity, as well as those of others. Children must play a key role in enabling a culture of peace to take root in society.

To further expand the reach and positive impact of a culture of peace, it is crucial that sustained efforts be made not only by the UN and governments but also by civil society. Through such efforts we must raise awareness about the constituent ideas of a culture of peace in terms of values, behaviors and ways of life.

As heirs to the spirit of Tsunetsaburo Makiguchi, the SGI has continued to urge that the happiness of children be the standard for measuring the success of any effort to resolve the problems confronting society.

Seeking to respond to the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, we created the exhibitions "The Children of the World and UNICEF" and "What Are Children's Rights?" which were held in locations throughout Japan. Another exhibition, "Treasuring the Future: Children's Rights and Realities," toured the United States starting in 1996. As part of our support for the International Decade, the exhibition "Building a Culture of Peace for the Children of the World" has traveled globally since its launch in 2004, and the "Children and a Culture of Peace" exhibition has been shown in numerous cities in Japan since 2006.

Children are envoys of the future; they are humanity's shared treasure. Convinced that instilling courage and hope in their hearts is the most certain path to a peaceful world, we will continue striving to build a global society that puts children first.

I am reminded of these words of Arnold J. Toynbee: "But we are not doomed to make history repeat itself; it is open to us, through our own efforts, to give history ... some new and unprecedented turn." [\[34\]](#)

This year marks the eightieth and thirty-fifth anniversaries of the founding of the Soka Gakkai and the SGI, respectively. Ours has been a history of ordinary people tenaciously working to create value, refusing to be swept away by the violent tides of the times. The darker the clouds of crisis that hang over the era, the more vigorously members of the SGI have worked to instill a light of hope. This is the determination that inspires individuals as they strive to be contributing members of their respective societies in 192 countries and territories around the globe.

Upholding the spirit of our founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi--to live a contributive life for the sake of oneself and others--and of our second president Josei Toda--to eliminate misery from the face of Earth--we will continue to employ the power of dialogue and engagement to awaken that which is best in each individual. This is the surest way to build a network of the world's people committed to peace and humanity.

Notes

- 1 Obama, "A Just and Lasting Peace."
- 2 Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, 45.
- 3 Todd, *L'illusion économique*, 24.
- 4 Izumi, *Kagakusha ga tou: Raise wa aru ka*, 10.
- 5 Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 182.
- 6 Weil, *The Simone Weil Reader*, 287-88.
- 7 Aitmatov and Ikeda, "Ikeda SGI kaicho to Chingisu Aitomatofu," 3.
- 8 Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions Based on Mein Weltbild*, 38.
- 9 Toynbee and Ikeda, *Choose Life*, 269.
- 10 Kajima, "Motomenai kokoro," 13.
- 11 Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions Based on Mein Weltbild*, 38.
- 12 Nichiren, *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, 123.
- 13 Marcel, *The Decline of Wisdom*, 33.
- 14 Nichiren, *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, 1:690.
- 15 Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, 85.
- 16 Ikeda, *Complete Works*, 39:39.
- 17 Toda, *Complete Works*, 3:290.
- 18 IAEA, "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons."
- 19 Kennedy, "Commencement Address."
- 20 ICRC, "Protocol for the Prohibition."
- 21 Ban, "For Peace and Development."
- 22 ICJ, *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, 266.
- 23 Weeramantry, "Dissenting Opinion of Judge Weeramantry," 433.
- 24 Weeramantry, *Universalising International Law*, 115.
- 25 UN, "Maintenance of international peace and security."
- 26 ICJ, *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, 264.
- 27 UN, "Strengthening collective security."
- 28 Dhanapala and Lewis, "Preface," viii.
- 29 ILO, "ILO marks its 90th anniversary with global dialogue."
- 30 G20, "Leaders' Statement: The Pittsburgh Summit."
- 31 Ban, "Report to the General Assembly."
- 32 UNIFEM, "UNIFEM Statement."
- 33 UN, "Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace."
- 34 Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, 45.

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