

Creating and Sustaining a Century of Life:

Challenges for a New Era

We have at last entered a new century. It is natural at such a time that there should be large measures of both hope and anxiety. Compared with the intellectual currents in vogue at the start of the twentieth century, what is starkly lacking today is the sense of optimism that was present then. Naturally there are great expectations regarding advances in science and technology—particularly in fields such as information and biotechnology—but there is also great foreboding, especially in Japan, about the political and economic fronts.

So what will the new century bring?

I think that many people today harbor a profound sense of disillusionment that makes them question whether the twentieth century was really a period of advancement for humankind. This is because, while the remarkable progress of science and technology brought with it many blessings, the ceaseless occurrence of war and the unprecedented horrors of the age have cast an indelible shadow over people's hearts.

How can we dispel this dark shadow? What should be the core values on which to base human endeavors in the twenty-first century?

When I ponder these questions, I am reminded of my discussions with Linus Pauling, hailed as the father of modern chemistry.

In our discussions, later published in book form, I shared my long-standing belief that we must make the twenty-first century a "century of life." Dr. Pauling extended his full support to this concept, which he described as "a century in which greater attention will be paid to human beings and their happiness and health" (45).

Born in 1901, Dr. Pauling's life spanned the whole of the turbulent twentieth century. As a scientist and a peace activist, he never, right up until his death at age ninety-three, ceased to interrogate human and social realities. For this reason, perhaps, I sensed a unique weight in his words.

Our decision to title the Japanese edition of our dialogue "In Quest of a Century of Life" was likewise spurred by the conviction that unless humanity grapples with the fundamental questions of life and death, we will not be able to identify the challenges we must overcome or the direction in which to advance.

How will history judge the twentieth century?

Eric Hobsbawm's important work *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991* is in this sense filled with valuable insights. The introductory chapter of the book, "The Century: A

Bird's Eye View," comprises the analyses of twelve thinkers of global standing. Reading this, one is struck by the consistency with which these views convey a sense of pained anguish.

René Dumont (agronomist, ecologist, France): "I see it only as a century of massacres and wars."

William Golding (Nobel laureate, writer, Britain): "I can't help thinking that this has been the most violent century in human history." (1)

Hobsbawm then asks: "Why, as the epigraphs to this chapter show, did so many reflective minds look back upon [the twentieth century] without satisfaction, and certainly without confidence in the future?" His answer is as follows: "Not only because it was without doubt the most murderous century of which we have record, both by the scale, frequency and length of the warfare which filled it, . . . but also by the unparalleled scale of the human catastrophes it produced, from the greatest famines in history to systematic genocide" (13).

Material Progress, Spiritual Regression

It may not be entirely fair to focus exclusively on the darker sides of recent history. There are certainly aspects of the twentieth century that deserve to be recognized as genuine progress and advancement.

First and foremost, perhaps, is the fact that overt imperialism and colonialism are no longer acceptable. Likewise, the United Nations has, despite its many failings, continued to function as a global political organization for the past half century, far longer than its short-lived predecessor, the League of Nations.

There are far fewer people who openly question democratic values. And while there is still a long way to go, the advances made by women, their emergence in all realms of society over the course of the past century, have been truly remarkable. While science and technology have produced a distinctly mixed record, on the positive side must be counted material affluence (however grossly maldistributed) as well as progress in the fields of transport, communications, medical treatment, and hygiene. These are all contributions whose importance I think no one would deny. And if we look at the degree to which humanity as a whole has access to human rights, there is a vast difference between the legal and institutional structures that existed one hundred years ago and those that pertain today.

Despite these achievements, the undeniable fact is that the twentieth century was an era stained by an unconscionable amount of bloodshed. One analyst's estimate is that twice as many people were killed in wars during the twentieth century as in the preceding four centuries put together. The past century was indeed an era of mass slaughter—of megadeath—without parallel in history (Sakurai 9).

In the final analysis, it must be said that the twentieth century was an era marked by a wanton disregard for human life. It was an age when the wellsprings of life were starved, dried up, and fouled.

Further, a careful examination of the list of advances and progress made in the twentieth century will reveal that these were virtually all material and physical. With regard to the inner realm of the human spirit, it seems undeniable that the era was marked by regression rather than advance. Humanity's spiritual life seems to have followed a one-way path of shrinkage and atrophy, to have become trapped in what Buddhism refers to as the "lesser self"—a state of isolation that results when the ties among people and between people and the cosmos are severed.

How can this historical trend be reversed to bring about a true century of life? This was the historical and civilizational challenge that Pauling and I together felt compelled to address.

Recently there have been many works reflecting on the twentieth century, not limited to the inquiries of historians. Among the books of this nature that I have had the opportunity to read, I was struck by the fact that more than a few refer to the idea of a spiritual crisis.

This was the subject of "The Crisis of the Mind," penned by Paul Valéry (1871–1945) in the aftermath of World War I. This 1919 essay sets out with urgency the spiritual crisis wrought by the world's first "total war." There was indeed a sense of foreboding that European civilization, which had seemed to be in its glory, might be verging on demise (23).

The issues that Valéry stressed were the impotence of knowledge, the cruel purposes to which science had been applied, and a sense of directionlessness. These problems are all still with us; Valéry's profound insights into the spiritual bankruptcy of Western modernity describe a trajectory that would continue into the final years of the twentieth century.

Elsewhere, he examines the underlying causes of the spiritual crisis, drawing a contrast with "the ancients, who set their philosophy as ardently to peopling the universe as we were later to set ours to emptying it of all life" (39).

While this statement may reflect a certain unjustified nostalgia for the past, at the same time I feel that it concisely encapsulates something essential about the times in which we live.

I don't, however, think that the process of "emptying the universe of life" was intentional. Efforts in the fields of both literature and philosophy were unable to overcome the impaired capacity of language to generate meaningful cosmologies. These earnest attempts to revive language and to inspire a living semantic space met with a general failure.

At the same time, the centrally important role of science and technology in this process must be admitted. The progress of modern science has been premised on a mechanistic view of nature as the object of manipulation and control, essentially separate from humanity.

In the final twenty-five years of the twentieth century, however, certain issues began to exert inexorable pressure for a paradigm shift in our approach to science. These include the dramatic

emergence of the global environmental crisis and the dangers inherent in cloning technology—a technology that represents an important intellectual frontier but which, if misapplied, could undermine the very foundations of our humanity. Our fundamental understanding of nature and of life must be an acknowledgment of the fact that the subjective and objective realms are inseparable and that humanity is an integral part of nature.

Takafumi Matsui, professor at the University of Tokyo, has argued that Descartes’s famous *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) should today be supplanted with something more along the lines of “I interact, therefore I am,” or “I engage with, therefore I am” (131). This is an assertion with which I am in full agreement. For it accords with the statement that I feel represents the essence of the philosophy of José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955), one that I referenced in my peace proposal of four years ago: “I am myself plus my circumstance, and if I do not save it, I cannot save myself” (*Meditations* 45).

Life, Heart, Spirit

Life—in the more encompassing sense indicated by Valéry, not merely the biological sense—is the focus of increasing interest and discussion in turn-of-the-millennium Japan. It is interesting to note that the words being used tend to be simple words of long standing—“life,” “heart,” “spirit”—written in the script historically used by women and appealing more to the emotions than the intellect.

Such discussions have been sparked by a spate of shocking crimes committed by children, which may explain the use of these words of direct emotional impact. More fundamentally, however, I feel that this demonstrates a slow but important shift in people’s concerns and values: the vital sensibility that lies at the very heart of the spiritual climate of the times.

Meeting Sir Yehudi Menuhin (1916–99) was for me a precious opportunity to share ideas in a frank and unrestrained fashion with a man whose vision and whose achievements as one of the century’s great violinists I deeply respected. Sir Yehudi was fond of referring to the words of the Native American leader Chief Seattle. Chief Seattle is said to have made a speech in the 1850s in response to an offer by white settlers to buy indigenous lands, which Sir Yehudi quoted as follows:

If I decide to accept . . . , I will make one condition: the white man must treat the beasts of this land as his brothers. . . . I have seen a thousand rotting buffaloes on the prairie, left by the white man who shot them from a passing train. I am a savage and do not understand how the smoking iron horse can be more important than the buffalo that we kill only to live. What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, man would die from great loneliness of spirit, for whatever happens to the beast also happens to man. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. (Qtd. in Daniels 187)

Sir Yehudi stressed the relevance of Chief Seattle’s words to our time—to all time.

Indeed we cannot afford to dismiss the awareness and sensitivity that inform this speech as

primitive animism or to view it as mere bucolic romanticism. The kind of discriminatory consciousness that would permit the slaughter of wild animals simply for entertainment also justified the forcible removal of the Native Americans from their lands and their containment in reservations. And, further, it is profoundly incompatible with the goal of bringing about a new century of life.

In its essence, discrimination is the act of throwing up barriers of difference among the phenomena that fill the universe and establishing among them a hierarchy of value, thus breaking the bonds that link and connect all things. This is then used to justify oppression and exploitation; as such, it must be condemned as a desecration of the sanctity of life itself.

An Interconnected, Interdependent World

“All things are connected.” Buddhism echoes and extends this awareness voiced by Chief Seattle. At the same time, it takes as its highest imperative the work of removing such barriers in the effort to approach the reality, the genuine aspect of life itself. This is expressed in the idea of a life-moment embracing both sentient and non-sentient existence. In other words, an essential life-moment (Jpn. *ichinen*) contains within it all phenomenal realms (*sanzen*) (Nichiren, *Writings* 355). This encompasses not only sentient beings, such as human and animal life, but non-sentient life such as grasses and trees, and even the seemingly lifeless mountains and rivers. Likewise, Buddhism teaches that Buddhahood—the potential for ultimate joy, wisdom, and compassion—exists in all things (Nichiren, *Writings* 848).

While there are more precise definitions of “life-moment” and “Buddhahood,” for present purposes it probably suffices to say that they are basically equivalent to the expansive sense of the word “life” that I have been employing. While Buddhism shares the direct appreciation of life that characterizes animism, its approach differs in the following regard. Buddhism regards life in its most profound sense not as something that is simply conferred upon us without effort, but as a luminous and fertile realm that can be entered and experienced fully only through the most strenuous spiritual effort.

There are parallels to the process described by René Descartes (1596–1650) in his *Discourse on the Method*. In other words, in an often absurd and contradiction-filled world, a fully awakened state of life can only be attained through a process of continuous and painstaking doubt and thought, a process that utilizes the full resources of knowledge, emotion, and will. Entry into the equal and impartial realms of life can only be attained by a sensibility polished and refined through a sustained and strenuous process of seeking.

To describe these realms as impartial and equal, however, does not mean to say that they are featureless or anonymous. What I am trying to describe is what Buddhism calls dependent origination (Jpn. *engi*)—the fact that all phenomena are interlinked, that they repeat cycles of emergence (birth) and withdrawal (death) in interrelation with each other. There are no words adequate to describe this reality, although such terms as plenitude, concentration, alertness, harmony, balance, and unity all come to mind. The Buddhist canon describes this state as “beyond all words, which neither thought nor action can convey” (Hori 563).

Even Shakyamuni Buddha in his fully awakened state felt great hesitancy before the task of attempting to convey to his listeners this profound and subtle enlightenment in a way that would not invite misunderstanding or disdain.

My own mentor, Josei Toda (1900–58), the second president of the Soka Gakkai, experienced severe persecution for his religious beliefs at the hands of the Japanese military authorities in the dark days of World War II. Imprisoned under brutal conditions, he devoted his efforts to pondering and seeking after the truth and was thus able to reach this realm of the true aspect of life itself.

During the course of his imprisonment, he determined that he would attempt to read and understand with his very being the Lotus Sutra. With focused prayer, he invoked the mantra of the Lotus Sutra some ten thousand times daily as he repeatedly read through the sutra. In the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra (Jpn. *Muryogi kyo*), which serves as an introduction to the Lotus Sutra, he encountered a passage that baffled him entirely. In a verse that praises the Buddha, he found the following:

His entity is neither existing nor non-existing;
Without cause or condition,
Without self or others;
Neither square nor round,
Neither short nor long;
.....

Neither that nor this,
Neither blue nor yellow,
Neither red nor white;
Neither crimson nor purple,
Without a variety of color. (*Taisho* 385)

In all, this verse contains thirty-four such negations. What could this Buddha be that would either remain or emerge from this tenacious process of being denied all possibility of expression?

With a focused and honed concentration of all his spiritual capacities, Toda gained the insight—and with it a grand and unshakable state of being—that the Buddha is nothing other than life itself.

I wrote the following words about Toda’s experience in my historical novel *Ningen kakumei* [The Human Revolution]: “That moment of opening in Toda’s life was sufficient to transform the future direction of philosophy in our world. This is certain to become clear with the passage of time” (18). This was my conviction when I first wrote these words in January 1968, and my belief has remained unaltered since then. Indeed, the continuing growth of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), which has now spread to some 163 countries and territories, traces its spiritual origin and impetus to Toda’s experience in jail.

Further, my own commitment to making the new century an era of reverence for the sanctity of life stems from the same source. I am convinced that my mentor's unique and invaluable experience can be the pivot for prying open the deadlock facing humanity. For I believe that his experience is indeed universal, transcending any narrow sectarian framework, sufficient to enrich the spiritual life of all humanity.

The Family in Crisis

The English historian Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975) urged us not to be taken in by the superficial aspects of history, but rather to look to the “slower, impalpable, imponderable movement that work below the surface and penetrate to the depths” (*Civilization* 213).

It was in this sense that I earlier stated my assertion that the frequent use in Japan of such terms as life, heart, and spirit is indicative of a profound transformation in the orientation of people's interests and thus in the currents of the times. I believe, very simply, that this represents a search for identity, for a satisfying sense of reality at a time when all values, structures, and systems are being questioned at the most elemental level.

In recent years, a great deal has been made of the revolution in communications and Internet technologies. The more basic question remains, however, of who will take up the challenges and realize the positive possibilities of this revolution. Where will people find a genuine sense of identity and purpose?

If we fail to address such questions, we may well find that the future awaiting us is anything but rosy, one in which life, heart, and spirit are in fact strangled and crushed. It is this sense of anxiety about an uncertain future that is urging people toward an inner journey or search. In any event, it is impossible for me to share the unalloyed optimism that some commentators hold for the explosion of information technologies.

The scale and depth of the crisis we presently face can only be grasped within the historical context of the spiritual evolution of the human species.

The family is said to be the oldest form of human community, and the development of the family unit is arguably what made us human and distinguished us from other animals. Nowhere is the impact of the crisis of life, heart, and spirit felt more intensely than in the family.

Parent-child relations, and family ties in general, differ from other human relations in that they are essentially not of our choosing. They should be recognized as something that issues from the depths of our being, and as such they represent the most real and vital connections. Yet even these bonds are losing their strength and indeed their reality.

In Japan, the crisis of the family has become steadily more apparent over the last several decades. It is, I believe, the underlying cause of the continuing incidence of truly disturbing and bizarre crimes committed by children. Behind each of these unthinkable crimes is a profound

weakening, or even complete breakdown, of the ties of familial love.

Indeed, as many commentators point out, the family is ceasing to be a place of renewal and revitalization and becoming a stifling one of isolation and alienation.

There is a sense that the bonds between people, as well as the connection that we should sense with nature and the cosmos, are losing their reality and becoming increasingly “virtual.” I think that the spiritual malaise afflicting so many young people in Japan today— isolation, withdrawal, extreme apathy, loss of expressive capacity, and collapse of personal identity—can be cited as evidence of this phenomenon.

This spiritual malaise has undermined the ability of people to sense the truth that “all things are connected.” With genuine reality obscured by multiple layers of its virtual counterpart, people are experiencing the uprootedness that the French philosopher Simone Weil (1909–43) so compellingly described as *déracinement*. They yearn for a conscious sense of being alive: in short, they are looking for themselves.

Reverence for Life

I believe that the crises of life, heart, spirit, and family all spring from this same source. And it is for this reason above all that I feel compelled to make reverence for life the driving spirit of the coming era.

By sounding the deepest realms of life—the vast, vital network of interaction and interdependence—we can reawaken and restore the bonds that have become so tenuous. I am speaking of the kind of love for life that J. W. von Goethe (1749–1832) has Faust voice when he declares:

I might entreat the fleeting minute:
Oh tarry yet, thou art so fair! (294; pt. 2, act 5, l. 11581–82)

Once illuminated by this deepest appreciation of life, we will be able to successfully reconstruct and reconfigure the true meaning of why we live and why we die.

Only if we are able to respond to existential questions—“Why this family?” “Why this gender?” “Why these sufferings?”—will we be able to answer the ultimate question—“Why must we not kill others?” Thus a renewal of reverence for life is necessary if humanity is to find a clear direction in the new century.

How do we go about doing this? Together with Faust, we must focus our efforts fully on the “fleeting minute.” For this, we must understand two things. One is that everything is contained in the present moment. The other is that the way we approach this moment is crucial and will determine the entire course of our lives.

The first of these understandings is necessary because the true aspect of life, of reality, is only to

be found in this very moment. Other than the present instant, all things are to some degree virtual. This is certainly true of the future, but it can also be said of the past. The events of the past are all set in the flow and framework of such artificial constructs as daily, historical, or scientific “time.” They are not genuine reality.

As we find in the Buddhist scriptures, “If you want to understand the causes that existed in the past, look at the results as they are manifested in the present. And if you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present” (Nichiren, *Writings* 279). This is not describing a linear progression of cause and effect. Rather, it indicates that everything is contained within the present instant.

As Josei Toda was able to discover, we encounter the deepest realms of life, of dependent origination, when we succeed in breaking through all artificial constructs, including the snares of language. Dependent origination describes the degree to which each individual existence is linked and connected with all others.

C. G. Jung (1875–1961), who was deeply versed in Eastern philosophy, expressed a similar insight as he reflected on the horrors of World War II: “Even if, juristically speaking, we were not accessories to the crime, we are always, thanks to our human nature, potential criminals” (296).

While this may seem an abrupt form of reasoning, from the perspective of the Buddhist teaching of dependent origination it has its own very convincing logic.

Awakened to this truth, we can sense the timeless bonds that connect us to those living in distant parts of the planet. We can understand and appreciate that every one of us belongs to the same human family. The limitless expansion of the self, the ability to sense that we are all bound together by innumerable unseen ties, is what Buddhism refers to as the “greater self.”

Second, our approach to the present moment is crucial because the true richness and overflowing vitality of life can only be accessed through ceaseless, moment-by-moment spiritual struggle. This attitude is the polar opposite of the indolence and passivity that signal spiritual bankruptcy.

In one famous passage, Nichiren, the thirteenth-century Buddhist sage whose teachings inspire the activities of the SGI, urges us to strive constantly to strengthen ourselves, day by day, month after month, and warns that we will fall prey to the forces of negativity if we slacken in the slightest (*Writings* 997).

In other words, only a person who maintains the constant effort to strengthen his or her mind, who maintains a taut and awakened consciousness, who soars in uninterrupted flight—only such a person will be able to touch the lodestone of genuine reality. This is the ideal of self-mastery that Shakyamuni expounded without cease. In contrast, a person whose mind is lax, whose attitude is passive, whose purpose is lost, will be consumed by such negative passions as fear, hatred, jealousy, and cowardice.

Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869–1948) stated: “There is no such thing as defeat in non-violence. The end of violence is surest defeat” (*Non-Violence* 129). This man, who never retreated a single step, is a grand exemplar and pioneer for the century of life.

“There is no such thing as defeat. . . .” This great spiritual leader was filled with unshakable confidence and pride with regard to the single point of always being master of himself. His living spiritual legacy will always be lit by the brilliant lights of glory and triumph. So long as this one principle remains uncompromised and undiminished, final victory is assured. While there remain innumerable challenges to the realization of Gandhi’s dream of a nonviolent world, I am personally confident that none of them would be sufficient to shake his conviction in the slightest.

Creative Coexistence and Autonomy

How can we characterize the spirit that must animate the twenty-first century if it is to be a century of life?

Two of the specific indices that come to mind are creative coexistence and the autonomous functioning of the inner will. Both of these are extremely close in meaning to the key words “life” and “dependent origination” that I have been discussing. At the same time, both have been conspicuously absent from the spiritual life of the twentieth century.

In sharp contradistinction to the ideals of creative coexistence and autonomy are competition (in the purely negative sense of the word) and externally applied pressure. These are key characteristics of the totalitarian philosophies such as fascism and bolshevism that dominated the twentieth century. I believe that the preeminence of such ideologies was perhaps the greatest single factor in making it an age of unprecedented slaughter.

All ideologies—not just fascism and bolshevism—share the inherent fault that they establish barriers of discrimination based on perceived differences. These are then treated as fixed and unchanging; one’s own superior standing is asserted, justifying the marginalization and oppression of others.

In times of social disorder, ideologies may take the form of extreme and fanatical sloganeering. In such cases, “competition” exhibits its raw and primitive aspects of conflict and the exclusion of others. External force is applied as the ruthless use of “hard power.” The blood-drenched history of the twentieth century powerfully attests to these tendencies.

Ortega y Gasset’s *Revolt of the Masses* is rightly renowned as a masterwork that unsparingly revealed the pathology of twentieth-century mass society. In it we find these insightful words, “This is the epoch of ‘currents’ and of ‘letting things slide.’ Hardly anyone offers any resistance to the superficial whirlwinds that arise in art, in ideas, in politics . . .” (105).

In such an age, the dangers of exclusion, conflict, and force grow exponentially. In the words of Joseph Goebbels’s infamous maxim: Repeat a lie a hundred times, and it will become the truth.

Such ideologies as the nationalistic fanaticism of fascism and the class struggle of bolshevism are the demonic products of unthinking submission to the prevailing currents.

I think we must recognize that the present movement toward globalization contains within it the danger of becoming yet another ideological “ism.” I am quite willing to acknowledge the positive potentials and merits of globalization as one megatrend of our times. Here again, however, I cannot share the unbridled optimism of some commentators.

Specifically, I am concerned that the inflexible application of so-called “global standards” can cause the logic of conflict, exclusion, and pressure to be brought to bear on those societies and parts of the world that do not fit a particular model of development. More than enough warning signs have already emerged to temper the enthusiasm of the most dedicated proponents of globalization. By this I mean the shocking disparity of wealth between and within societies as well as the purely speculative, nonproductive global movements of money that are sometimes referred to as “casino capitalism.”

I believe that we must carefully attend to the dearly-bought lessons of ideological domination. We must replace unrestrained competition with an ethos of coexistence, the application of external pressure and force with the autonomous decisions of people and societies. I believe we must uphold these new values as we advance steadily toward our long-term goal of making the twenty-first century truly a century of life.

The Buddhist teaching of dependent origination, which places ultimate emphasis on interrelatedness and interdependence, is essentially synonymous with creative coexistence. Further, in Buddhism the workings of life—the realm of genuine reality reached when we see past the false trappings of language and the tendency to see things as fixed, unchanging entities—are described as “the moment-to-moment spontaneous issuing forth” (Hori 752). Indeed, this phrase describes the essentially inner-motivated, autonomous nature of the vital force of life.

If these values can be made into the driving spirit of the age, we will be able to put behind us the nightmares of the twentieth century and realize a century of life and of peace, a peace that is much more than a mere interlude between wars.

Women against War

Here I feel it is necessary to stress the extremely important role that women can and must play in realizing this kind of world in the twenty-first century.

In contrast with the conflict, exclusion, and force that are the hallmarks of ideology and which are traditionally linked to the psychology of men, women are naturally oriented toward such values as unity and harmony—the kind of creative coexistence and autonomy that I have identified as central to a century of life.

This is something that both Gandhi and his close friend and ally, the great Bengali poet |

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), were quick to recognize. Gandhi expressed his hopes for women in the most clear and direct language. “If only women will forget that they belong to the weaker sex, I have no doubt that they can do infinitely more than men against war. Answer for yourselves what your great soldiers and generals would do, if their wives and daughters and mothers refused to countenance their participation in militarism in any shape or form” (*All Men Are Brothers* 163).

Likewise, Tagore argued from a macro perspective that women’s contributions are essential if we are to transform the male-centered civilization of force into a civilization of the spirit.

So the next civilization, it is hoped, will be based not merely upon economical and political competition and exploitation, but upon world-wide social cooperation; upon spiritual ideals of reciprocity, and not upon economic ideals of efficiency. And then women will have their true place. (218)

The values, principles, and ideologies that are presently being called into question are all the products of male-dominated societies. As these are all increasingly in flux and their underlying rationales are interrogated, values such as life, heart, and spirit are coming increasingly to the fore. Each of these is intimately linked with “the feminine.”

In this sense, I am certain that the emergence of women in the twenty-first century has a significance that goes to the very core of human civilization. I believe that this will prove even more important finally than legal and economic liberation, as vital as that is.

Thus a century of life must also be a century of women. Since I founded it as a peace research center in 1993, the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century (BRC) has made the role of women one of the central themes of its research and education activities. The center’s work on such issues as United Nations reform, the global environment, and creating a culture of peace has all been carefully structured to include the perspectives and voices of women.

This approach is based on the awareness that unless women’s perspectives are incorporated and their contributions actively sought, there is a real risk that the resulting research will fail to generate useful ideas. Indeed, it could even skew thinking away from the core strategies needed for the fundamental resolution of the challenges at hand.

One of BRC’s mottoes is: Be a beacon lighting the way to a century of life. It is indeed my hope that BRC will continue its research efforts with a special focus on women as it works to build a global network of peace research, illuminating the way toward the oceanic expanses of the century of life.

The Family: Crucible of Humanity

The crisis of the family, which threatens to undermine the most basic levels of our humanity, brings into sharp focus the need for women to claim a more central role. The collapse and reconstruction of the family is one of the larger trends of contemporary history and, for example,

is a central theme in Francis Fukuyama's *Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order*.

We need to look at this from the broader historical perspective.

In a sense, the history of the family can be considered the history of humanity. According to the Japanese primatologist, Masao Kawai, whereas the mother-child bond dates back some 200 million years, to the emergence of mammals, the history of fatherhood is a mere 5 million years. For it was by the males of the species accepting the role of fatherhood opposite the females as mothers that the distinctive human structure of the family emerged, separating the human species from other mammalian herds. Kawai claims that the collapse of the family signals the loss of our species identity and an abandonment of our humanity; we face a crisis of proportions unprecedented in the history of our species.

In order for us to maintain and deepen our humanity, it is essential that mothers and fathers work together in a partnership of reciprocity and mutual support. The relationship between them must be one of creative coexistence, based on a recognition of interdependence, or dependent origination.

The key to making this kind of mutually supportive and reciprocal relationship work is women's initiative. Men best function, in my view, as good partners and collaborators; the protagonists of the family are women. Direct and indirect experience has convinced me that the wisdom and strength of mothers is the central element in the healthy development of individuals.

I am not, of course, calling for a return to traditional gender roles, in which women's lives are limited to the home—the stereotypes that are currently being challenged. It is simply that if we look at the span of the history of the family, we must recognize that women play a profound, indeed immeasurable, role that must be accorded the very highest respect.

Indeed, the limitations of the modern male identity are such that Goethe's Faust, its embodiment *par excellence*, must seek salvation from self-destruction in the "eternal feminine" (308; pt.2, act 5, l. 12110–11).

Building Consensus on Japan's Peace Constitution

Here I would like to discuss the current debate about the Japanese Constitution. While this may be a specifically Japanese issue, I believe it is one that must be addressed if we are to realize the promise of a century of life.

It is only natural and right that, in order to respond to historical and social changes, appropriate measures should be taken to review the constitution, the highest law of the land. Like Japan, Germany also began its postwar history under a new constitution, one that sought to reflect the bitter lessons of World War II. In contrast to the Japanese, the German people have amended their constitution on numerous occasions in the intervening years.

In Japan, in January 2000, constitutional research commissions were established in both the upper and lower houses of the Diet, initiating the process of parliamentary debate on the current constitution.

There is a tendency to frame any debate on the Constitution solely in terms of war-renouncing Article 9, as views are sharply split on whether this clause should be maintained as it is or amended. This narrow focus is unfortunate and shortsighted as it obscures other important constitutional issues that bear directly on the kind of democracy Japan aspires to become in the twenty-first century. These include: diverse and complex human rights issues, the need to respond to emerging environmental challenges, and the problems raised by new information and communications technologies. Also meriting consideration are the introduction of national referenda and the direct election of the prime minister as means of better reflecting the popular will.

It is important that the Constitution be reviewed in light of these issues and in order to realize the goal of a better society. In this sense, I feel that constitutional debate is both necessary and positive.

But it is imperative that such review be conducted within the framework of a long-term vision, sustained by enduring principles. Hasty revision based on shortsighted goals, for immediate political gain or without taking the time to develop genuine national consensus, must be avoided at all costs. To do so could be cause for regret and would call into question the legitimacy of the constitutional review process.

In any debate on constitutional reform, we must never forget that the ideals of pacifism and international cooperation expressed in the Preamble and Article 9 are the very heart and soul of Japan's Constitution—that which qualifies it to be called a “peace constitution.”

While there is room for multifaceted debate on specific national security policies, I am concerned above all that the principles and spirit of the peace constitution not be eroded. And, for this reason, I feel that Article 9 should not be touched, a view that I have long asserted.

Sadly, the kind of pacifist message that Japan has broadcast to the world during the past half century under the present constitution has been all too feeble. Those efforts that have been made have been undermined by persistent and anachronistic moves to turn back the clock or even to attempt to justify Japan's past wars of invasion. The result is that Japan has not emerged as a truly pacifist nation recognized and trusted by our Asian neighbors or by the world as a whole.

The Pitfalls of “One-Country Pacifism”

Japan's proponents of peace have suffered from a tendency to turn inward, to limit their interest to Japan, and this is linked to the failure to produce the kind of concrete actions that can actually transform the world. The net result of this egotistical “one-country pacifism,” which ignores movements in international society and the concerns of other countries, has been a false peace. This is far from the original spirit of the Constitution, whose preamble declares the right of

humankind to coexist in peace.

If we are to make the new century a complete departure from the past century of war, it is imperative that Japan break out of this stagnation and deadlock. I believe that in the twenty-first century Japan should act from a realistic and global perspective and breathe new life into the spirit and ideals of Article 9, sharing these with the world.

I am reminded of the following words of the Japanese philosopher Arimasa Mori (1911–76). “The world is a competition in self-control. It is in this sense that the political is superior to the military. In this is also to be found the true meaning of peace” (163).

This is a view that we should carefully heed. What have been most lacking in Japan’s postwar political culture—not only with regard to debates on constitutional issues—have been self-mastery, genuine conviction, and the taut and awakened consciousness that I referred to earlier.

It is an undeniable fact that during the Cold War years, Japan’s leaders acted in a way that was neither self-directed nor self-reliant. Nor has this changed in the post-Cold War era. The collapse of Japan’s bubble economy, an event whose psychological impact is sometimes compared with Japan’s defeat in World War II, has produced a spiritual landscape of passivity and apathy far estranged from any ideal of self-mastery or conviction.

The same applies to constitutional debate. The most important thing is to develop and elaborate, with care and autonomy, the core principles and convictions of pacifism that characterize the entire constitution. And it is my belief that this can be done without revising Article 9.

Article 9, in particular the first paragraph, owes a debt to the 1928 Treaty of Paris, in which the signatories renounced war as an instrument of national policy. This was a direct attempt to realize humanity’s profound desire for the abolition of war. By renouncing “war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes,” the Japanese Constitution accepts limitations on national sovereignty. From its origin, it is clear that Japan’s acceptance of this condition of limited sovereignty was predicated on the idea that the relinquished aspects of sovereignty would be entrusted to an international body, specifically the United Nations.

Japan’s best and most natural choice is therefore to make the voluntary limitation of sovereignty an impetus to work in a carefully coordinated fashion with the UN to build a world of lasting peace.

This is entirely in accord with the spirit of the Preamble of the Japanese Constitution and the UN Charter. By locating the particular constitutional commitments of Japan within a larger, universal context, it should be possible to develop the kind of policies that make Japan known to the world as a true nation of peace. Japan has an opportunity to take the lead in creating the conditions for genuinely universal and effective UN-centered security and conflict prevention systems.

In conjunction with this, it is crucial that we find effective means to promote international understanding and cooperation. Here there is clearly room for Japan to take a more proactive stance. Japan can contribute, based on the spirit of self-mastery and genuine conviction, in such fields as international development and the raising of living standards as well as educational, cultural, and sports exchanges.

In order to do this, it is essential that all Japanese citizens renounce passivity and embrace a profound commitment to meaningful action. It is my fervent and unchanging desire that Japan play a leading role in the unprecedented experiment and challenge of realizing a world without war.

A Central Role for the UN

The success of Japan's efforts in these regards is deeply linked to the future direction and development of the UN.

To realize peace in the coming century, it is absolutely essential that we replace the traditional ascendancy of competing national interests—the cause of so much war and tragedy—with an international community dedicated to the welfare of the whole of humankind and Earth.

The UN can and must play a pivotal role in this transformation. The challenges facing humanity—promoting peace and disarmament, protecting the environment, eradicating poverty—clearly require that we cooperate and harmonize our efforts across national boundaries. Indeed, we must unite as one humanity engaged in a common struggle.

In this sense, we really have no choice but to turn to the UN. For half a century, it has been actively building international consensus as a forum for global dialogue; it has consistently engaged in humanitarian relief and assistance programs in different parts of the world. It is my belief that only the UN, for all its limitations and problems, can play the axial role in uniting humankind.

The United Nations Millennium Declaration adopted by the unprecedented gathering of heads of state and government at the Millennium Summit of September 2000 has a profound significance in this regard.

Calling on the countries of the world to share responsibility for managing global issues, the declaration clearly states: “As the most universal and most representative organization in the world, the United Nations must play the central role.”

The lofty objective and founding spirit of the UN are powerfully expressed in the Preamble of the Charter: “We the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind”

It is time to move forward with the effort to create a framework that genuinely engages all of humankind in a shared struggle to abolish the scourge of war from the face of Earth.

Soft Power, Popular Participation

Discussion about the future direction of the UN inevitably focuses on such questions as: “What kind of world do we seek?” and “How will we respond to the various challenges that confront us?” As we ponder these questions, we must bear in mind above all that the UN’s essential nature is to be found in “soft power”—the power of dialogue and cooperation.

While the UN Charter clearly accepts the possibility of the exercise of “hard power,” including military action—Chapter VI, on the pacific settlement of disputes, is followed by Chapter VII, stipulating enforcement measures—precedence is firmly placed on the peaceful resolution of conflict; the use of hard power is reserved for crisis situations that absolutely necessitate it. To realize international peace and security through soft power is the unchanging, foremost mission of the UN.

This is evident in the origins of the UN—the bitter lessons of two world wars. If we are to make the twenty-first century a century of life built on the ethos of creative coexistence and autonomy, it is vital that we never lose sight of this fundamental principle.

While the legitimate functions of the UN Security Council must be acknowledged, it is clear that the UN of the twenty-first century must be centered on a soft-power approach that emphasizes conflict prevention and stabilization of potential crisis situations.

This requires the promotion of human security—the safety and well-being of human beings rather than simply the integrity of national borders.

To this end, we should fully incorporate the invaluable lessons and experiences of the past fifty years to enable the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and humanitarian agencies to assume ever more constructive and active roles. In that regard, I sincerely hope that meaningful results will emerge from an earnest debate on what we as humankind can do for future generations at the General Assembly Special Session on Children in September 2001.

Equally crucial to the work of strengthening the soft-power orientation of the UN is the task of enhancing cooperative relations between the UN and civil society, the broad spectrum of nongovernmental and volunteer movements. This is vital if we are to ensure that the UN is genuinely of the people, by the people, and for the people.

The UN will be disempowered and marginalized if it is overtaken by the logic of confrontation and exclusion, the negative legacy of a twentieth century that was dominated by competing national interests. If the UN gives in to the temptation to rely on pressure and coercion, this will create sources of further conflict, and it will lose credibility and trust. Therefore, it is essential to strengthen its identity as an organization dedicated to the well-being of all humankind and fundamentally supported by the people. It is not too much to say that the destiny of humanity in the twenty-first century will be determined by the success of efforts to empower the UN and assure the people a central role in its workings.

This new imperative is clearly reflected in the Millennium Declaration mentioned earlier. The section on strengthening the UN defines civil society as an indispensable partner, and voices the resolve to “give greater opportunities to the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society, in general, to contribute to the realization of the Organization’s goals and programmes.” This is a highly significant statement that explicitly aims at enabling the UN to grow beyond its current framework as a gathering of sovereign states.

People’s participation is the best way to revitalize the UN. Even more centrally, however, this is necessary if the UN is to transcend its present limitations and evolve into a pivotal focus for the activities of global civil society. By bringing together the wide-ranging talents and capacities of ordinary citizens, the UN will be able to enrich and strengthen the humanistic quality that should be its essence. This, I am convinced, is the path it should pursue as it moves into the future. Now is the time to take effective steps to implement and realize this vision.

In this regard, the proposals made at the We the Peoples Millennium Forum, a gathering of global civil society held in May 2000 as a lead-up to the Millennium Summit, are a rich source of ideas for concrete action.

In one of the adopted papers, the Forum urges the creation of a Global Civil Society Forum. It calls for the extension of the NGOs’ consultative rights of access and their participation in the General Assembly and other principal organs of the UN.

These initiatives are consistent with ideas I have proposed in the past, and I call for them to be realized promptly.

Reform Proposals

Last year, the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research published *Reimagining the Future* (Camilleri et al.), a report of the Global Governance Reform Project. This is a product of research conducted in collaboration with La Trobe University, Melbourne, and Focus on the Global South at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. Specifically, it reflects the work of two expert panels that included such leading thinkers as Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former secretary-general of the UN.

Calling for democratized global governance as one of the keys to strengthening the UN, the report presents specific initiatives for bold reform, such as the creation of a people’s assembly that will make the organization more open and accessible to civil society.

Some years ago, I had the opportunity to share views with Johan Galtung, a pioneer of the field of peace studies. At that time, he offered this comment on the special value of a people’s assembly: “Perhaps I believe more in long-lasting dialogues leading to new ideas and consensus than in short debates entailing few ideas and ending in decisions reached by means of voting, in which there are winners and losers” (140).

New institutional means must be developed that fully integrate people's participation in a process of dialogue. This is the most certain way of developing the kind of long-term vision that leaves no one behind and takes the interests and concerns of all parties into consideration. Plans along these lines are being proposed by various organizations, and I believe strongly that the time has come to take meaningful steps toward their realization.

NGOs should not simply be seen as playing a supporting role to that of governments; they, in fact, are the key actors in building a new international order based on an ethos of creative coexistence and autonomy. The UN will be effective in guarding the dignity and security of each individual to the degree that it incorporates people's energies and efforts.

Similarly, one key to resolving the UN's long-standing challenge of securing stable sources of financing may lie in enlisting the support of the world's people.

The current dependence on member states' contributions hinders the ability of the organization to engage in emergency responses to crises or to address issues in a focused and sustained manner. Stabilizing UN finances by including an additional funding stream would help alleviate these problems.

In this connection I would like to suggest the creation of a people's fund for the UN, learning from the examples of independent fund-raising implemented so successfully, for example, by UNICEF. This new body would be actively engaged in fund-raising, accepting donations from individuals, organizations, and corporations. The funds collected would be used primarily to support the humanitarian activities of the UN.

Eradicating Poverty, Protecting the Environment

Here I would like to address the urgent global issues of alleviating poverty and protecting the environment. These are key problems to be resolved as part of humanity's common struggle, led by the people themselves and centered on the UN.

More efforts must be focused on the eradication of poverty. According to the World Bank's *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*, 1.2 billion people, approximately twenty percent of the world's population, live on less than US\$1 a day. And all indications are that this number is, if anything, increasing.

Last year, the World Bank also published an important report titled *Voices of the Poor*. This is the product of a ten-year effort to collect the firsthand voices of some sixty thousand people from sixty countries. Conveying the actual realities of poverty-stricken lives, the study seeks to illuminate the underlying nature of the problem and what poor people seek.

The World Bank urges that the following points be considered in implementing policies and assistance programs: 1. Expanding economic opportunities for the poor to free themselves from poverty. 2. Empowering people to shape decisions that affect their lives and work. 3. Developing basic infrastructure and programs to extend assistance during disasters and

emergencies.

The Nobel prize-winning economist Amartya Sen echoes this view. In his book *Development as Freedom* he maintains that people should not merely be regarded as the beneficiaries of development programs but that “With adequate social opportunities, individuals can effectively shape their own destiny and help each other. They need not be seen primarily as passive recipients of the benefits of cunning development programs” (11).

I completely agree with Sen that people should be seen as the agents of change. It is crucial to find out from the people themselves what is needed and reflect it in assistance and development programs rather than arbitrarily planning these in a unilateral, “top down” manner. This is the true significance of democratization.

At the international level there should be a permanent forum where the voices of marginalized people can be heard. Currently, it is only the wealthy developed countries that have created opportunities, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) summits and the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland—to come together and discuss the direction of international politics and economics.

Here I would like to propose that what might be called an “Earth Forum” be established as a bridge between the people of the developing countries and these meetings of the world’s wealthy. This could facilitate dialogue and discussion toward a global society that is truly just and equitable.

I envision that this forum would centrally involve the participation of the developing countries through their governmental and nongovernmental representatives, as well as those of international bodies, including the UN secretary-general. Sharing and learning from the failures as well as the best practices of various countries and agencies, it would encourage the kind of globalization policies that will truly respect developing countries’ points of view, the kind of human development that will meet the real needs of people. This forum could meet twice a year, sending representatives to summit meetings and Davos to present its findings and demands, ensuring that the views of the developing world are more adequately reflected in the agendas of these conferences.

The G8 Kyushu-Okinawa Summit 2000 was the first OECD summit that included dialogue between the leaders of developed and developing countries. This experience should be built on, and such dialogue should be made an integral part of the ongoing summit process. This kind of dialogue is vital to unite the world’s people in the cause of eradicating poverty and the untold suffering it causes.

The other challenge we must meet is that of protecting and enhancing the global environment.

The 1992 Rio Earth Summit accelerated awareness of the need for cooperation on a global scale to protect the environment. This awareness has taken the form of such international environmental treaties as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Despite these efforts, however, the destruction of Earth's environment continues to outstrip the responses. Globally, the situation continues to deteriorate, and if this trend is not reversed, we are virtually certain to confront a crisis of devastating proportions. The only path left to us is a revolution in the consciousness of both individuals and entire societies. This is precisely the aim of the Earth Charter Initiative promoted by Mikhail Gorbachev and others, and herein lies its great value.

For a number of years now, the SGI has been engaged in a wide range of activities to support the Earth Charter campaign. In addition, BRC also held conferences and seminars that provided multidimensional perspectives and input to the Earth Charter drafting process.

The text of the Earth Charter was finalized in March of last year. Its language is the product of tenacious efforts to integrate the voices and opinions of people of different backgrounds from throughout the world.

In four chapters and sixteen sections, the Charter sets forth a comprehensive set of ethical principles on which to build a new global society. The titles of the respective chapters clearly convey the scope and depth of this document: Respect and Care for the Community of Life; Ecological Integrity; Social and Economic Justice; Democracy, Nonviolence, and Peace.

It is my firm conviction that the principles of the Earth Charter, the crystallization of a process of global dialogue, can serve as the foundation for a century of life.

One of the goals of the Earth Charter Initiative is to seek its endorsement by the UN General Assembly in 2002, the tenth anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit. It is crucial that the Earth Charter principles take root in each person's life as fundamental ethical guidelines. Its words must not become simply an intergovernmental agreement.

The SGI will continue to promote the Earth Charter through wide-ranging activities including newly planned exhibitions, raising grassroots awareness toward its official adoption and encouraging individuals everywhere to make the Charter a personal pledge and commitment.

China and India: Future Roles and Contributions

The last areas I would like to address in discussing the practical steps to be taken if we are to realize a world of creative coexistence and autonomy are the regional concerns of Asia and Africa.

Regarding Asia, I would like to focus on the roles of China and India. Both countries are destined to assume increasing importance not only by virtue of their population, size, and significance to international security but even more importantly from what might be termed a civilizational perspective.

I recall with fondness the image of Arnold Toynbee as he shared with me his thoughts on China: "Perhaps it is China's destiny now to give political unity and peace not just to half but to all the

world” (*Choose Life* 251).

Resounding in the depths of his words was the conviction, a consistent factor in his grand theory of history, that our vision should not be clouded by immediate phenomena; that the future can only be accurately envisaged by carefully attending to the deeper, slower movements that are the ultimate determinants of history.

At the time I was calling for the restoration of diplomatic relations between Japan and China and the admission of China into the UN. Toynbee’s assessment of China’s importance resonated strongly with my own sentiments. One year after my series of dialogues with Toynbee in London, my long-standing desire to visit China was realized in 1974.

Since then, I have sought, in my capacity as a private citizen, to promote grassroots cultural and educational exchanges in order to deepen the bonds of friendship between China and Japan. Over the course of these efforts, I have become intensely aware of numerous qualities cited by Toynbee as the spiritual legacy of Chinese civilization. These remain a vital force today, maintaining their relevance to contemporary society through a process of adaptive transformation.

One of these qualities is a worldview that places precedence on harmony over confrontation and on unity over fragmentation. The other is the humanistic thinking that seeks the best available solutions through actual practice rather than a rigid adherence to theory.

The emphasis on harmony indeed suggests an ethos of creative coexistence, a wisdom fostered over the millennia and symbolized by the Datong utopia. This was, incidentally, one of the themes I addressed when I spoke at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1992. The practical perception of reality, meanwhile, has given rise to a gradualist methodology of reform seen in the bold experiment of a socialist market economy. Likewise, the idea of “one country, two systems” launched after the return of Hong Kong and Macao is an extension of such thinking.

It is intensely regrettable that some elements of Japanese society still deny the historical reality of Japan’s war of aggression against China and that these denials have even found their way into school textbooks. In 1995, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Japan’s defeat, Japan’s then prime minister expressed profound repentance and heartfelt apology. We can no longer tolerate denials of historical fact, for they not only bring into question the sincerity of this official statement but also discredit Japan’s standing in the international community as a nation of conscience.

Like China, India’s long history is imbued with a profound spirituality. In the magnificent lineage that flows through Shakyamuni Buddha, King Ashoka, and Mahatma Gandhi we can see the full splendor of the human spirit.

While space does not permit a detailed examination, I believe there exists in India what could be termed a cosmic humanism. This transcends the limitations of the humanism of modern scientific rationality, which had the ironic effect of reducing human beings to an ever smaller,

more insignificant presence. It takes as its highest ideal creative coexistence based on shared spiritual principles rather than conquest by force. It seeks to realize a harmonious society that respects diversity rather than the divisions of discrimination and exclusion.

C. G. Jung stated that “in India there seems to be nothing that has not lived a hundred thousand times before” (517). This echoes the Buddhist ideas of interconnection and interdependence.

In recent years, it seems that only certain aspects of India and China, such as their nuclear capability or their emerging technical prowess, have caught the world’s attention. But I believe that the power of the spirit, the undercurrent flowing throughout the history of both India and China, clearly has the potential to be one of the driving forces to bring about an era of soft power.

It is not my intention, of course, to glorify the past of these two countries, and I am fully aware of the various challenges they presently face. Nevertheless, I have no doubt that they can each contribute importantly to Asia and the entire world if the spiritual heritage they have nurtured over the long course of history can be creatively developed and brought to blossom within the larger framework of a new global civilization.

The Koreas: Dialogue for Peace

No country is free of a negative past or present problems; it is unproductive to focus exclusively on the darker aspects of any country or culture. It is far more constructive for each culture to “compete” in terms of exerting the most positive influence on other cultures and the world. The same thinking was behind my proposal, first made in 1998, that the current G8 summit be permanently expanded to include China and India as these countries also have a special responsibility to the world.

The twentieth century saw the dark nadir of competition for dominance. Humanity in the twenty-first century must shift its focus from the pursuit of hegemonic dominance to a “humanitarian competition” that brings forth an era of creative coexistence and unleashes the inner spiritual and moral qualities of each culture and tradition.

More than anything, it is dialogue that holds the key to putting the race for dominance permanently behind us. The leaders of the two halves of the divided Korean Peninsula last year held talks of truly historical significance, reminding us again of the value and importance of dialogue.

For the first time ever, the heads of state of these two countries—President Kim Dae-Jung of the Republic of Korea and Chairman Kim Jong-Il of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea—met in Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. For three days last June, they discussed the issues of peace and the peninsula’s future.

For more than fifteen years, I have repeatedly called for face-to-face meetings between the top leaders of the two Koreas. In my 2000 peace proposal, I asserted that the opportunity be seized,

fifty years after the start of the Korean War, to bring to a close the state of cold war on the Korean Peninsula. Thus I followed the realization of this dialogue with particularly profound emotion.

It is critical that this summit meeting be followed up in order to unravel this long-standing stalemate and bring about a genuine easing of tensions on the peninsula.

It is my sincere hope that Chairman Kim Jong-Il's visit to Seoul, called for in the South-North Joint Declaration, will be realized in the near future and that a process of regular summit talks can be established. I further wish to express my earnest desire that the two Koreas continue the process of confidence-building and advance steadily toward eliminating the threat of war on the peninsula.

The Challenge and Promise of Africa

Africa is, along with Asia, a region of crucial importance to world peace. Since the end of the Cold War, regional and internal conflicts have broken out in various parts of Africa, ravaging people's lives and livelihoods. According to one survey, in the eleven years since the end of the Cold War, there have been 108 armed conflicts that have each claimed more than one thousand lives. The majority of these tragic conflicts have occurred in Asia and Africa (SIPRI).

As a result of prolonged conflict situations, a growing number of Africans live as refugees, as many as 6.2 million as of January 2000 according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Food shortages and famine are often the tragic by-products of conflict. *The State of Food and Agriculture 2000* published by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that nineteen African countries suffer from famine whose primary cause is armed conflict. And there has been a much more dramatic increase in such cases than for those where famine is provoked by natural disaster.

Failure to find effective remedies to the problem of persistent poverty has given rise to a misplaced sense of pessimism about the continent, intensified by so-called "aid fatigue" on the part of developed countries. Consequently, international concern for Africa has shrunk in inverse proportion to the severity of need, exacerbated by the problem of AIDS.

Africa's crisis, however, is a challenge that must be met if we are to realize peace in an increasingly globalized world. And from a basic humanitarian perspective, indifference is inexcusable.

The historical realities Africa has long endured—colonial rule and arbitrary division of territory by the great powers—must be acknowledged as among the root causes of the present crisis situation. It is therefore humanity's shared responsibility to ensure that this tragic legacy is not carried forward into the future.

Africa is the birthplace of humankind. It has been a continent of hope, giving rise to a rich diversity of civilizations since ancient times which have given humanity numerous blessings in many areas, including philosophy and science.

It has long been my belief that the twenty-first century must be the century of Africa. This conviction is in part rooted in the experience of my first visit to the UN Headquarters in 1960, soon after I accepted the responsibility to serve as third president of the Soka Gakkai. There, I witnessed and was deeply impressed by the energy and vitality of the African delegates participating in the General Assembly and various committee meetings. Indeed, 1960 was an extraordinary year for Africa, with seventeen African nations winning their independence.

From that time I began to develop friendships with the political, cultural, and intellectual leaders of various African countries, hoping to contribute to the realization of a century of Africa. Moreover, as the founder of Soka University and the Min-On Concert Association, I have been actively engaged in promoting broad educational and cultural exchange at the grassroots level.

The SGI has been particularly committed to supporting refugee relief activities undertaken by the Office of UNHCR. Our fund- and awareness-raising campaigns in support of UNHCR and other bodies will continue this year, the fiftieth anniversary of the Refugee Convention.

Peaceful Solidarity: Africa's Mission

Lasting peace in Africa, our neighbor in an interconnected world, must be an immediate concern to everyone. Over the decades, many important, constructive visions for Africa have been set forth. Ideas to bring together the nations of Africa in strong solidarity and a shared pursuit of peace and prosperity include those made by Ghana's first president Kwame Nkrumah (1909–72) and other leaders of the Pan-Africanist movement for a United States of Africa. These cannot be dismissed as mere relics from the dawn of the postcolonial period.

A United States of Africa was one of the visions that Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo and I discussed during our dialogue two years ago. Indeed, there is a rising awareness among African countries of the importance of strengthening Pan-African solidarity.

At the summit meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) held in Lomé, Togo, in July 2000, leaders from twenty-seven countries signed a proposal to create an African Union. Drawing from the experience of European integration, this African Union will have an African Parliament, a Pan-African court of justice, and the continent's own central bank.

Although no agreement was reached on a timetable for its creation, it is truly significant that African countries have agreed on the common goal of an African Union.

Over the course of its long history, the OAU has realized many achievements, ranging from the establishment of the Banjul Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty to the recent mediation of the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict.

It is the international community's responsibility to provide unstinting support and cooperation to the creation of an African Union and the further strengthening of continental unity.

The European Union reviewed its achievements of the past half century in *Strategic Objectives for 2000-2005: "Shaping the New Europe"* as follows: "The European Union provides living proof that peace, stability, freedom and prosperity can be brought to a continent once torn apart by wars" (3). Viewed over a span of fifty to one hundred years, there is no reason to believe that what has been accomplished by the EU should not be possible for Africa also.

Envisaging a United States of Africa, President Nkrumah of Ghana stated that it

will emerge . . . as a Great Power whose greatness is indestructible because it is built not on fear, envy, and suspicion, nor won at the expense of others, but founded on hope, trust, friendship and directed to the good of all mankind. (xii)

I believe that this vision of peaceful solidarity, defined as Africa's mission by President Nkrumah, should be the guiding principle of regional integration in the twenty-first century. Competition rooted in animosity and exclusion, external pressure and coercion, breeds only fear, envy and suspicion. In contrast, the overflowing vitality of the human spirit seeking creative coexistence and autonomy cultivates hope, trust, and friendship.

This year is the United Nations International Year of Mobilization against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The World Conference on this theme is to be held in September in South Africa. The SGI plans to participate in NGO forums to be held in parallel with the intergovernmental meetings, and to stress the importance of human rights education to counteract the ignorance that is the root cause of intolerance.

Strength, Wisdom, Solidarity

The destiny of Africa and indeed of all humankind in the twenty-first century hinges on the degree to which ordinary people awaken their inner capacities for strength, for wisdom, and for solidarity. I cannot stress enough the value of open dialogue in bringing forth these qualities.

Dialogue has the power to restore and revitalize our shared humanity by setting free our innate capacity for good. It is an indispensable lodestone around which people are united and trust is fostered. It was the failure to make dialogue the foundation of human society that unleashed the bitter tragedies of the twentieth century.

The year 2001 has been designated the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We must spread the spirit of dialogue to make it the current and flow of the twenty-first century—a century of life. In this way we can together create an era in which all people enjoy the fruits of peace and happiness and celebrate their limitless dignity and potential.

Dialogue can lead to the creation of a new global civilization. The members of the SGI, as engaged and responsible citizens of their respective societies, will continue to use honest

dialogue to build a people's solidarity for peace and humanity throughout the world.

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