



Soka Gakkai International

NGO Activity Report

The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is a worldwide association of 82 constituent organizations with memberships in 192 countries and territories. Based on the life-affirming philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism, SGI members aim to develop positive human potentialities for hope, courage and altruistic action.

As an NGO with formal ties to the United Nations, the SGI has been active in public education with a focus on peace and disarmament, human rights and sustainable development as well as providing humanitarian assistance and promoting interfaith dialogue. This report covers the period up until August 2009. Activities fall under consistent broad themes, but the scope and nature of the activities conducted in each country vary in accordance with the culture and characteristics of that society.

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INTRODUCTION

SGI's activities to promote peace, culture and education are part of the longstanding tradition of Buddhist humanism. SGI has been active in public education with a focus on peace and disarmament, human rights, sustainable development as well as providing humanitarian assistance and promoting interfaith dialogue. Each of the 82 national SGI organizations operates independently, and programs of socially-engaged activities are developed in line with local priorities and expertise.

In addition to activities as an organization, taken at the local, national or international levels, SGI emphasizes the empowerment of its individual members to play an active and contributing role in society. Central to this approach is the philosophy of “human revolution,” whereby a deep inner-motivated change within a single individual’s life is seen as impacting the destiny of a nation and the world.

There are SGI UN liaison offices in New York, Geneva and Vienna. As a nongovernmental organization (NGO) at the United Nations, Soka Gakkai was admitted as an NGO associated with the Department of Public Information (DPI) and was listed as an NGO in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) both in 1981. SGI was granted consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN in 1983 and has been listed with UNHCR since 1997.

SGI has initiated programs in support of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World and played an active role in the UN process for the realization of the World Programme for Human Rights Education and the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). SGI President Ikeda’s annual peace proposals suggest broad themes for the organization’s NGO activities.

SGI actively participates in networks including the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationships with the UN (CONGO), the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN, the NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security and the NGO Committee on Peace in Vienna and the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning. At the local level, SGI groups partner with local community organizations and educational institutions.

The following are selected highlights of SGI’s peace activities.

1. PEACE AND DISARMAMENT

SGI's nuclear abolition efforts trace their roots back to 1957 when second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda (1900-1958) made a public declaration calling for the elimination and prohibition of nuclear weapons. Since then, the SGI has been working to promote nuclear abolition and the creation of a culture of peace through a number of initiatives including the following:

DISARMAMENT AND PEACE INITIATIVES

Petition Drives:

- Petition for the Abolition of All Nuclear Weapons and for the Elimination of War
In 1973, youth members of Soka Gakkai Japan launched a petition drive and gathered 10 million signatures which were presented to then Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim at the UN in 1975.
- Abolition 2000 International Petition
The SGI joined this campaign and collected more than 13 million signatures, mainly in Japan. The signatures were presented in 1998 to the Preparatory Committee of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT PrepCom) chairperson Eugenius Wyzner during its session in Geneva as well as to Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette on behalf of Secretary-General during Disarmament Week in New York.

Awareness Raising:

- Publications of war experiences
The youth division of Soka Gakkai Japan compiled and published 80 volumes of more than 3,000 individual war experiences from World War II during the period from 1974 to 1985. The Soka Gakkai Women's Peace Committee in Japan published a 20-volume work, *In Hope of Peace*, which chronicles the experiences of women who lived through World War II.

Since 1980, Soka Gakkai Japan has held more than 30 forums appealing for a world free from war, and collected over 5,000 anti-war essays written by people who experienced firsthand the ravages of war. Three volumes of war experiences have been published in English, in *Cries for Peace*, *Peace is Our Duty* and *Women Against War*.

- DVD of Women's Testimonies from Hiroshima and Nagasaki
In 2005, the Soka Gakkai Women's Peace Committee in Japan filmed 31 female war survivors from all over Japan talking about their experiences and compiled a DVD of eight of their accounts for educational purposes. From 2009 a multi-language version of this resource was made available.
- People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition – Campaign and Website
In September 2007, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda's anti-nuclear declaration, SGI launched the "People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition" campaign, a grassroots movement to galvanize public opinion over the urgent need to abolish nuclear weapons. A related website was launched on April 2, 2009. See: <http://www.peoplesdecade.org>. The site features key facts and news related to nuclear

abolition, as well as sections titled "Get Involved" and "Experts Say." Visitors to the site are invited to contribute their own ideas and experiences, which will add a leaf to the site's "Olive Tree of Peace." The site also has educational resources, including an explanatory leaflet that can be downloaded.

Exhibitions:

- **“The Women and The Pacific War”**
The exhibition featured the stories of women and wartime materials from the Pacific War with the message that such stories contain precious lessons for future generation that should not be forgotten if we are to construct peace. It was first shown in Tokyo in 1981, then toured Okinawa, Yokohama, and other locations in Japan, and was viewed by hundreds of thousands of people until 1987.
- **“Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World” and “Nuclear Arms: Threat to Humanity”**
The “Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World” exhibition was first presented in 1982 at the UN Headquarters concurrent with the General Assembly Second Special Session on Disarmament (SSDII) and in cooperation with the UN Department of Public Information and the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The exhibition was viewed by 1.2 million people in 25 cities in 16 countries until it ended its first term world tour in 1988 as part of the World Disarmament Campaign adopted at SSDII. The cities where it was shown include Paris (1983), New Delhi (1986), Beijing (1986) and Moscow (1987).

This exhibition was updated following the end of the Cold War and resumed its tour under the title “Nuclear Arms: Threat to Humanity” in 1996 in San Jose, Costa Rica. It was viewed by about a half million people in 14 cities in eight Latin American countries. During a showing of the exhibition in Mexico in 2002, the youth members of SGI-Mexico collected 60,000 signatures on an anti-nuclear petition which was submitted to the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL).

- **“The Mother and Child Anti-War”**
In the form of prayers of all mothers who cry for peace, in 1984, young mothers in Fukuoka, Japan, gathered wartime materials and stories from those who had experienced World War II to create an exhibition for the next generations who do not have firsthand knowledge of war.
- **“War and Peace”**
This exhibition which describes not only the destructive effect of all wars but also humanitarian and environmental issues that confront human beings, was launched at the UN Headquarters in 1989 in cooperation with the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs and International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW). This exhibition was shown 13 cities in five countries up to 1993.
- **“Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century”**
Started in 1998 in San Francisco, an exhibition introducing the life and achievements of this tireless campaigner for peace toured seven cities in the United States including Washington, D.C. and five cities in Japan. In 2003 the exhibit was displayed at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris and at the Palais des Nations in Geneva during the NPT

PrepCom under the auspices of the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). To date, it has been viewed by more than one million people.

- **“From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace: Transforming the Human Spirit”**
This exhibition presents issues on nuclear weapons through the lens of human security, while placing the work of nuclear abolition at the heart of building a culture of peace. It was launched in 2007 in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of declaration against nuclear weapons issued by second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda at the launch of the decade of action by world’s people for nuclear abolition.

The venues where the exhibit has been shown include the University of Hawaii, the University of Hong Kong, the New Zealand Parliament, the Cooper Union in New York City, the UN Office at Geneva during the preparatory session of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2008, the Oslo City Hall Gallery, and the Cibao Grand Theater, Santiago, Dominican Republic, as well as numerous venues in Malaysia and Taiwan.

Participation in UN Processes in cooperation with the NGO Community:

SGI participates in committees and networks and contributes to joint endeavors together with likeminded groups and individuals such as:

- **NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security, New York**
SGI has been a member of the Board of Directors since 2002.
- **NGO Committee for Disarmament, Geneva**
SGI has been a member of the Committee over the years and a member of the International Bureau of the Committee since 2007.
- **NGO Committee on Peace, Vienna**
SGI has been a member of the Board of Directors since 2007.
- **NPT review conference**
An SGI delegation participated in the meetings held at the United Nations Headquarters preparatory to the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference.
- **Global Action to Prevent War**
The SGI is a member of the International Steering Committee of Global Action to Prevent War.
- **Geneva Forum**
The Geneva Forum is a Geneva-based international network on disarmament facilitated by the Quaker UN Office, the UN Institute for Disarmament Research, and the Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies of the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, which also involves the academic sector and governmental delegates. SGI has been participating in the NGO network of the Geneva Forum.

Forums and Workshops

- **Bomb Experience Rally**

In August 2007, the Soka Gakkai Hiroshima Women's Peace Committee sponsored a *hibakusha* experience rally at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Hall. An A-bomb survivor shared her experience of the atomic bombing.

- Civil Society Peace Forum commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Antinuclear-Declaration and the launch of the People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition
In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's Declaration Calling for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, SGI, organized a Civil Society Peace Forum titled *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons: What can each of us do?* on September 8, 2007 at The Cooper Union, New York City, cosponsored by Global Action to Prevent War and the World Federation of United Nations Associations. A panel discussion was moderated by Kathleen Sullivan, a UN disarmament education consultant, and the panelists included experts from the Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy (LCNP), the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Security Institute, and the Peace Education Center of Columbia University Teachers College.
- Workshop on the Eradication of Armed Conflict in Australia
From February 8-10, 2008, SGI participated in a Workshop on the Eradication of Armed Conflict held at the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (ACPACS) at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, organized by Global Action to Prevent War (GAPW). An SGI representative chaired a session on the theme "From Conventional to Nuclear Weapons: Movement Forward on Nuclear Disarmament." The event was cosponsored by GAPW, ACPACS, the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) and the project for a United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS).
- Symposium in the Danish Parliament
On November 17, 2008, a symposium titled "Strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)" was held at Christiansborg Palace, which houses the Danish Parliament, in Copenhagen. SGI-Denmark and the Danish Committee of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs (Pugwash Denmark) cosponsored the event together with several peace organizations. Some 150 peace scholars, activists and ambassadors to Denmark attended the event, including former IAEA Director General Hans Blix.
- Seminar entitled "Nordic Initiatives for Nuclear Abolition"
On April 15, 2009, the seminar was held at the Nobel Institute in Oslo, moderated by Stein Tønnesson, Director of the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO). Sverre Lodgaard, Senior Research Fellow of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), emphasized the importance of serious debate on both the vision of the abolition of nuclear weapons and the means to realize it, stressing that it is essential for civil society to raise their voices and take action. This seminar was organized by the SGI, PRIO and NUPI and supported by No to Nuclear Weapons (NTA), Norwegian Physicians Against Nuclear Weapons (NLA) affiliated with International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, the Norwegian Pugwash Committee, the Norwegian Atlantic Committee (NAC) and the United Nations Association of Norway.
- Symposium held during NPT PrepCom, New York

On May 11, 2009, SGI held a symposium titled "Nuclear Abolition and Human Security: Shared Action to Meet a Common Threat" during the NPT PrepCom in New York. The speakers were: Kazuo Tase, chief of the Human Security Unit, UN Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs; Patricia Lewis, Deputy Director of the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies; and Kathleen Sullivan, Education Consultant to the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs. The event, cosponsored by ICAN, explored how the perspectives of "human security"--a commitment to welfare of real people's lives as opposed to the often abstract imperatives of national interests--can be brought to bear in countering the threat of nuclear weapons.

CULTURE OF PEACE

The UN General Assembly declared the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010). SGI has been promoting a culture of peace through a series of exhibitions, lectures, workshops and conferences.

Awareness Raising:

- **Manifesto 2000**
Initiated during the International Year for a Culture of Peace in the year 2000, Manifesto 2000 was a grassroots international signature-collecting and awareness-raising campaign endorsed by all the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates and UNESCO. It contained six pledges: Respect All Life, Reject Violence, Share with Others, Listen to Understand, Preserve the Planet and Rediscover Solidarity. SGI members in several countries actively participated in this campaign in gathering signatures for the Manifesto 2000 petition promoting the International Year for the Culture of Peace.
- **Victory Over Violence**
Launched by the SGI-USA in 1999, "Victory Over Violence" is a grassroots initiative to help promote a culture of peace and non-violence among youth. Youth facilitators who make presentations in schools have been trained and over 5,000 grassroots discussions have been held. Over 110,000 individuals have signed a "Victory Over Violence" pledge to lead non-violent lives. In 2005, SGI-New Zealand began to introduce the "Victory Over Violence" program into high schools in the Reporoa area. Students make a personal pledge to value their own life, to respect all life, and to inspire hope in others. They discuss ways of responding to daily life situations of violence.

Exhibitions:

- **"World Boys and Girls Art"**
Held in cooperation with UNESCO and various national governments since 1989, this exhibition promoting peace and intercultural understanding presents 400 children's paintings selected from more than 100,000 entries from 161 countries. It has been displayed in more than 25 countries including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia, South Africa, Brazil, Cambodia and China.
- **"Women and a Culture of Peace"**
An exhibition on "Women and A Culture of Peace" created by the Women's Peace Committee of Soka Gakkai Japan in collaboration with peace scholar Elise Boulding has been touring in Japan since 2003, with concurrent lectures and seminars held in various locations.

- “Building a Culture of Peace for the Children of the World”
The exhibition “Building a Culture of Peace for the Children of the World” was launched at the UN Headquarters in February 2004 where it was seen by 10,000 people, including many local schoolchildren. It has also been shown at Columbia and Harvard Universities, the World Bank headquarters in Washington DC., as well as in Canada, Switzerland, Spain, India, Malaysia, Jordan, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Dubai, Philippines, Luxembourg Bolivia, and Panama. The exhibition illustrates the importance of building a culture of peace at all levels of society, highlighting the work of peace activists and showcasing essays and artwork of children, the inheritors of this task.

Seminars, Conferences and Workshops:

- SGI panel “Culture of Peace” at the Hague Appeal for Peace Conference 1999
8,000 people from over 100 countries took part in this conference held from May 11-15, 1999. As one of the conference programmes of the Global Forum, SGI organized a panel “Culture of Peace - Ideals and Actuality” in collaboration with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UNHCR.
- “Women Leading the Way to a Culture of Peace” workshop
At the 1999 Seoul International Conference of NGOs, which took place in October 1999, SGI organized a workshop entitled “Women Leading the Way to a Culture of Peace.”
- Bharat Soka Gakkai (SGI-India) “Building A Century of Peace: The Role of Young Women” Symposium
SGI women members held a symposium to discuss the role of young women in contributing to a peaceful world in Delhi in July, 2001. Some 300 people participated.
- Soka Gakkai Japan, Women’s Peace Committee Hosts Culture of Peace Forums
On November 26, 2005, the Soka Gakkai Women’s Peace Committee in Japan sponsored “Culture of Peace” forums in Tokyo, Saitama, and Shizuoka. Some 1500 attended the forum in Tokyo.
- Youth Nonviolence Conference
The SGI-USA New York Culture Center has been hosting the Annual Youth Nonviolence Conference on Martin Luther King Jr. Day since 2004. The conference, jointly organized by the Temple of Understanding, the SGI-USA and other youth groups, brings together over one hundred youth from the New York metropolitan area each year.
- Youth Assembly at the United Nations
The Youth Assembly at the United Nations is held in August annually at the UN Headquarters in New York. Youth representatives from the local SGI organization participated and organized a workshop on SGI-USA’s Victory Over Violence initiative in 2006 and 2007 consecutively.
- Events to commemorate 60th anniversary of the end of World War II
In 2005, to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Young Women’s Peace Committee carried out a survey on

attitudes to war and peace among different age groups in Japan. In July an Intergenerational Culture of Peace Forum sponsored by the Women's Peace Committee of the Soka Gakkai was held in Yokohama where young people could hear experiences from those affected by war. Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, president of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, spoke on "The Status of Human Security: 60 Years After the Atomic Bombs" at the Hiroshima Ikeda Peace Center. A World Youth Peace Music Festival was held in Hiroshima's Central Park, and a peace rally for Japanese and international students also took place.

- Culture of Peace Distinguished Speaker Series
SGI-USA has opened Culture of Peace Resource Centers in New York, Santa Monica, Chicago and Honolulu as part of its effort to promote a culture of peace. The centers in New York and Santa Monica launched the Culture of Peace Distinguished Speaker Series in 2007, and a similar Culture of Peace Resource Center has now been set up in the new SGI-USA Washington DC center. Speakers have included Anwarul K. Chowdhury, former Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of the UN; Jeffrey Sachs of the Earth Institute at Columbia University; Betty Reardon of Teachers College Peace Education Center, former child soldier Ishmael Beah and Nobel Peace Laureate Betty Williams.
- Culture of Peace Seminar in New Delhi, India
The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and Bharat (India) Soka Gakkai jointly organized a seminar titled "Daisaku Ikeda: Building a Culture of Peace" at the IGNCA lecture hall in New Delhi on May 3, 2007. Over 400 guests attended.

2. HUMAN RIGHTS

The quest for human rights can be perceived as “a challenge of otherness” in which individuals develop the courage to acknowledge, respect and appreciate the differences among people. In support of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), the SGI promoted human rights education through various means including advocacy for continuation of global efforts in human rights education, and now actively supports the World Programme for Human Rights Education:

Exhibitions:

- **“Human Rights photo exhibition against Apartheid”**
In collaboration with the UN Centre against Apartheid and the African National Congress (ANC), the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee in Japan organized an anti-apartheid photo exhibit in seven venues in Japan, and was viewed by more than 100,000 people from 1991 to 1992.
- **“Toward A Century of Humanity: An Overview of Human Rights in Today’s World”**
SGI President Daisaku Ikeda met with Mr. Nelson Mandela, then deputy president of the ANC in 1990, and announced several initiatives which included creating an exhibition promoting human rights. The SGI in 1993 launched this exhibition at the United Nations University headquarters in Tokyo, later held at Palais des Nations in Geneva in cooperation with the then UN Centre for Human Rights. It was then shown around the world in support of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). The exhibit was viewed by more than 500,000 people including many schoolchildren in 40 cities and towns in eight countries over a 10-year period.
- **“The Courage to Remember” exhibition on the Holocaust**
In 1994, Soka Gakkai Peace Committee in Japan helped prepare an exhibition hosted by Soka University, in cooperation with the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the first exhibition on the Holocaust held in Japan. Since then it has toured more than 60 cities and been viewed by around two million people.
- **“Treasuring the Future: Children’s Rights and Realities”**
Presenting a synopsis of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, this child-friendly exhibition toured around 30 cities in the United States. It was shown in New York twice: in 1996 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of UNICEF and in 2002 during the UN Special Session on Children.
- **“UN Human Rights Prize Awardees” Exhibition**
On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1998, SGI donated to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights a permanent exhibit on “UN Human Rights Prize Awardees.” The exhibit has been displayed since at the High Commissioner’s Office in Geneva every 5 years when the UN Human Rights Award ceremony takes place on 10 December, International Human Rights Day.
- **“City of Human Rights”**

SGI-Italy developed an exhibition entitled “City of Human Rights” late in 2001. Under the patronage of the President of the Italian Republic and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, this exhibition has since been shown in several Italian cities where it has been seen by over 100,000 people. In many cities, the exhibition was accompanied by Earth Charter forums for students organized by local schools, and “Talk Shows” where they could present their concerns directly to local politicians and leaders.

- “Human Rights in the 21st Century—Treasuring the Individual”
As part of its efforts to support the World Programme for Human Rights Education, Soka Gakkai Japan created a new exhibit on human rights supported by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Information Centre in Tokyo. The exhibit has been shown in 7 cities in Japan since it was first shown in Osaka, Japan, in 2005. An international version of this exhibition is also planned.

Participation in UN Processes in cooperation with the NGO Community:

A few years prior to the end of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), SGI actively advocated the need for a global framework to follow on from the UN Decade in collaboration with other organizations.

- Active Commitment to Realization of the World Programme for Human Rights Education
SGI collaborated in partnership with other NGOs to initiate and promote discussion in the international community at the former UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva in the process of adoption by the UN of the World Programme for Human Rights Education.
- Participation in expert meeting in Geneva
In September 2004, an SGI representative contributed to finalizing the draft Plan of Action of the World Programme as one of the 50 experts invited by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNESCO in Geneva.
- NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education & Learning, Geneva
In association with the NGO network of CONGO, SGI took the initiative in the formation in May 2006 of an NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education & Learning in Geneva, aiming at ensuring NGO participation in global policy-making processes in the UN. Currently the SGI representative to the UN in Geneva is the Chair of the Working Group.
- NGO Statement at UN Human Rights Council
At the sixth session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on September 27, 2007, an SGI representative made a joint NGO oral statement at the plenary meeting on technical assistance and capacity building. SGI and the World Federation of UN Associations worked together to draft the statement to support the proposal of Costa Rica to extend by two years the first phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (WPHRE). An SGI Representative spoke on behalf of the 17 organizations which put their names to the statement. SGI also endorsed another joint NGO oral statement by 12 organizations that expressed a wish to further promote human rights education in light of the upcoming 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

- The Committee of NGOs on Human Rights, Geneva
SGI is an active member of the Committee which facilitates NGO activities on various human rights issues and liaison with the UN human rights institutions.
- NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Geneva
SGI is an active member of the Committee. It comprises major religious NGOs and non-religious NGOs, and serves to promote and defend freedom of religion or belief in connection with the UN human rights bodies and in consultation with experts and government delegates.

Seminars, Workshops and Conferences:

The SGI co-organizes seminars and workshops at regional and international levels in order to promote international human rights standards. They include activities at the UN former UN Commission on Human Rights and the UN Human Rights Council. SGI also actively participate at international conferences and meetings.

- Roundtable at the World Conference Against Racism (Durban 2001)
In August 2001, SGI co-organized with other NGOs a roundtable on education for human rights at the NGO Forum held in parallel with the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa. A statement from SGI President Ikeda read at the roundtable called for support by the international community for a global framework for human rights education to continue after the end of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004).
- Conferences, Meetings and Training Courses (2004-2008)
A representative from SGI was invited to conferences, meetings and training courses with a key responsibility to contribute to promotion of HRE. They include: the International Expert Conference on Human Rights, Austrian Ministry for European and International Affairs (Austria, 2008); the European Regional Meeting on WPHRE, Council of Europe (France, 2007); International Conference on HRE, Norwegian Helsinki Committee (Russia, 2007); Summer Training Course, Mediterranean Academy of Malta University (Malta, July 2005); and Inter-American regional conference, UNESCO HRE Chair of Chile, Universidad de la Academia de Humanismo Cristiano (Chile, November 2004).
- Participation in the Conference of NGOs (CONGO) General Assembly
The SGI Representative to the UN in Geneva, who is also chair of the Geneva-based NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning (WG on HREL) of CONGO, chaired a workshop on "Dynamic Partnerships for Human Rights Education and Learning" on the occasion of the 23rd General Assembly at the International Conference Center in Geneva on December 5-7, 2007.
- SGI-Canada Joins Event Calling for Elimination of Racial Discrimination
On March 30, 2008, 130 SGI-Canada members from the Ontario region participated in an event organized by York Regional Police in partnership with various local cultural and religious groups to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Around 400 people joined the event at Bur Oak Secondary School in Markham, which included a showing of the "Gandhi, King, Ikeda: A Legacy of Building Peace" exhibition created by Dr. Lawrence Carter of Morehouse College.

- SGI-USA Hosts Human Rights Film Festival in Santa Monica, California
On October 24, 2008, the SGI-USA Santa Monica Culture of Peace Resource Center hosted the opening of the Eighth Annual Human Rights Film Festival in Santa Monica, California. The goal of the festival, curated by the Echo Park Film Center, was to highlight social justice issues often ignored by the mainstream media. The festival featured films from a variety of countries, including Taiwan and Mexico, examining real-life stories that underlie human rights issues.
- Interfaith Human Rights Celebration in Washington DC, USA
A ceremony that brought together representatives from ten faith traditions celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the new SGI-USA Washington DC Culture Center on December 2, 2008. The Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, the United Nations Association of the National Capital Area and SGI-USA organized the event. Representatives of each religion shared the practices and beliefs that compel them to support universal human rights.
- SGI Representative Lectures on Human Rights Education in Budapest
SGI representative to the United Nations, Geneva, Kazunari Fujii, gave a lecture at an Asia-Europe training session for youth leaders on "The Role of Human Rights Education in Intercultural Dialogue--an Asia-Europe perspective," held from May 17-24, 2009, at the Council of Europe European Youth Centre in Budapest, Hungary.

Other Activities:

- Signature Collection Calling for Moratorium on the Death Penalty
Between 1999 and 2000, members of SGI-Italy collected 500,000 signatures on a petition calling for a moratorium on the death penalty. The signatures, part of a campaign coordinated by the Community of St. Egidio, were presented a conference in July 2000 organized by the Italian Senate to promote abolition of the death penalty.

3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Based on the Buddhist concept of the oneness of life and its environment, the SGI promotes education for sustainable development and activities related to environmental protection.

Exhibitions:

- **“The Amazon – Its Environment and Development”**
This exhibition was first presented under the auspices of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It has since toured five countries in South America.
- **“Seeds of Change”**
The exhibition “Seeds of Change: The Earth Charter and Human Potential” was created by SGI and the Earth Charter Initiative and shown during the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002. Since then, this exhibition has been translated into eight languages and been shown in 18 different countries, often in partnership with other NGOs. In Taiwan, in 2003, it was shown in over 120 locations as part of Community Friendship Culture Festivals which aimed to energize local communities after the SARS epidemic had forced people to spend long periods at home. In 2008, it was shown in venues in Peru, Paraguay, Iceland, India, Mexico, Panama, Italy and the USA.
- **The 21st Century Environment Exhibition Opens in Tokyo and Hyogo Prefecture**
In July 2008, “The 21st Century Environment,” an exhibition showing how every individual can play a role in tackling environmental problems, was launched by Soka Gakkai in Tokyo and Hyogo Prefecture and has since been shown in various locations around Japan.

Research Facilities:

- **Amazon Environmental Projects and Research Center**
The BSGI (Brazil SGI) Amazon Ecological Research Center is situated near Manaus, in the middle reaches of the Amazon River. In cooperation with Soka University’s Center for Environmental Research in São Paulo, the center’s activities include reforestation, environmental education, contributions to the protection of endangered animal species, and establishing a seed bank to collect and preserve the seeds of Amazonian trees.

Conferences:

- **Dialogue of Cultures for Sustainable Development**
At Taplow Court, SGI’s main center in the UK, a Pre-UNCED conference was held in collaboration with the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council in 1992, on the theme of “A Dialogue of Cultures for Sustainable Development.”
- **Workshop on Education for Sustainable Development**
During WSSD (2002) in Johannesburg, together with the Earth Charter Initiative, the Center for Respect of Life and the Environment and the SGI co-organized a panel

discussion entitled “Educating for Sustainable Living with the Earth Charter” which brought together over 100 people.

- The International Experts’ Workshop on Faith-based Organizations and Education for Sustainability

This workshop was held in Barcelona, Spain, from March 22 to 24, 2007. Organized by Centre UNESCO de Catalunya and cosponsored by UNESCO, 23 experts from UNESCO, academia, and interfaith and faith-based groups were brought together from around the world. SGI’s UN representative was invited to speak at the workshop.

Collaboration with the Earth Charter Initiative:

Since 1997, the SGI has been promoting the Earth Charter Initiative, as a statement of common values and principles for sustainable development and a people’s movement of dialogue and action toward sustainability. It organized a number of public consultation meetings to contribute to the finalization of the Charter. After the Charter was finalized in 2000, it shifted its emphasis to promotion and education about the Charter in cooperation with other groups.

- Earth Charter Workshops and Seminars

Numerous seminars and workshops have been held, in partnership with schools, other NGOs and faith-based groups, in over 20 countries, from an Earth Charter Festival during WSSD PrepCom IV in Bali, Indonesia in 2002, to a series of Earth Charter Seminars in New Zealand in 2003.

- Earth Charter Community Summits

In the USA and Scotland, SGI members have been involved in local Earth Charter Community Summits where sustainable living is promoted through the performing arts, interfaith panels and activities for children.

- SGI-Canada Vancouver Youth Earth Charter Committee

SGI-Canada Vancouver Youth Earth Charter Committee (YECC) was awarded the Mayor’s Environmental Achievement Award at the city’s Sustainability Fair 2005. The YECC has carried out Earth Charter workshops in schools, participated in interfaith events and the annual “Keep Vancouver Spectacular” clean-up and started battery recycling and low-energy light bulb use drives in partnership with local organizations. In July 2008, the Committee launched a "Summer of Sustainability" campaign at the city's Central City Shopping Center, distributing a checklist of 50 actions people can take reduce their carbon footprint.

Participation in UN Processes in cooperation with the NGO Community:

- Action toward adoption of UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

In December 2002, the General Assembly adopted the resolution for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). This proposal was originally proposed by a Soka Gakkai representative at the Japanese NGO Forum for WSSD in late 2001. This idea was taken up by the Japanese Government, accepted at the WSSD, and approved by the General Assembly in December 2002.

- Proposal on education for sustainable development
For the WSSD, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda issued a proposal entitled "The Challenge of Global Empowerment" (<http://www.sgi.org/do/ngo-resources/proposal.html>), calling for education to be the basis of progress toward a sustainable future. He suggests three key themes for the UN Decade: learning, reflection and empowerment, and cites the Earth Charter as a key educational resource. "Education," Mr. Ikeda writes, "must inspire the faith that each of us has both the power and the responsibility to effect positive change on a global scale."
- Involvement in CSD
At the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), SGI has worked on the promotion of education for sustainable development. In the CSD Education Caucus, SGI has been playing an active role in organizing panel discussions as well as drafting joint statements and other documents. SGI has also contributed to bringing together faith-based organizations active in this area.

In May 2008, the SGI representative to the UN in New York, Hiro Sakurai, chaired a workshop on "Engaging People in Sustainability: the Role of Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue" at the Church Center for the UN in New York. The meeting, a related event of the UN CSD, was attended by representatives of UN agencies, NGOs and faith organizations. It was stressed that religious organizations have a vital role to encourage learning processes, communicate "sustainable development" from a faith perspective, and promote individual choices which embody respect for the common good.

Educational resources:

- "A Quiet Revolution" Film
The SGI supported the making of this film which was produced by the Earth Council in collaboration with UNDP and UNEP. This award-winning documentary highlighting individuals who have taken action to solve local environmental problems has been shown in numerous public forums including during the WSSD process, and on national TV stations around the world and the National Geographic Channel. It has been widely used by schools and NGOs in many countries as an educational resource for the Decade of ESD. It is available in an eight-language DVD: English, French, German, Japanese, Traditional Chinese, Spanish, Korean and Arabic.
- Classroom Connections, Canada
SGI-Canada has collaborated with Classroom Connections, an NGO which produces educational materials related to peace and diversity in English and French, to have the film "A Quiet Revolution" and miniature panels of the "Seeds of Change" exhibition incorporated into an educational package entitled, "Cultivating Peace—Taking Action" which has been widely circulated in Canadian high schools.

Tree planting:

- **SGI-Dominican Republic**
SGI members in the Dominican Republic have planted a total of 35,000 trees in rural areas of the country since 1998. A series of seminars on reforestation have also been held.
- **SGI-Canada**
SGI-Canada youth have held tree-plantings in Ontario as one of SGI-Canada's projects to promote the Earth Charter. Local Canada youth have engaged in tree-planting efforts for several years, under the leadership of Credit Valley Conservation, an environmental protection organization. On June 7, 2008, SGI-Canada youth members helped plant 85 trees in Alton, Ontario. SGI-Canada members have helped plant 3,000 trees since 2000.
- **SGI-Costa Rica**
On May 11, 2008, SGI-Costa Rica members participated in a tree-planting project in a village in Turrialba, 65 km east of the capital, San José. Some 80 SGI-Costa Rica members planted 280 trees, together with environmental preservation groups.
- **SGI-Bolivia Youth City Beautification Activities**
Since March 2003, SGI-Bolivia youth have continuously engaged in environmental preservation and city beautification activities in various locations. Their efforts have earned the trust of local communities and governments throughout Bolivia. On February 26, 2005, SGI-Bolivia and Montero City Culture Department co-hosted a youth seminar in Montero. Some 80 young people, including local senior and junior high school students participated.

SGI-members in Philippines, Venezuela, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand have also held tree planting activities.
- **Litter Clean-ups**
SGI-members in the UK, Vancouver, Canada; Korea, Togo and Germany have for many years regularly undertaken environmental cleanup campaigns.

Response to Climate Change:

- **Soka Gakkai Malaysia Sponsors Lecture on Sustainable Uses for Raw Garbage**
On September 30, 2008, a lecture titled "Saving Earth Through the Garbage Enzyme" by Lee Wei Meng of the Naturopathic Family Care Centre drew 100 people to the Soka Gakkai Malaysia (SGM) Penang Culture Center. Producing garbage enzyme apparently generates ground-level ozone that has anti-global warming effects if carried out on a large scale,
- **SGI-Hong Kong Cohosts Exhibition and Lecture on Global Warming**
To raise awareness on global warming and climate change, SGI-Hong Kong and the China Polar Museum Foundation Limited (CPMF) coorganized a photo exhibition titled "A Call from Global Warming" which was shown at various SGI-Hong Kong centers from October 2008.

- Soka Gakkai Malaysia Supports Earth Hour 2009
At 8.30 p.m. on March 28, 2009, Soka Gakkai Malaysia (SGM) members joined millions in over 2,000 cities around the world in turning out their lights for one hour in support of Earth Hour, an event emphasizing the need for more concerted action in tackling climate change.
- Young Women Participate in Philippines Earth Day Forum
On April 26, 2009, SGI-Philippines young women held their first Earth Day Forum titled "Epekto ng Global Warming" at the SGI Philippines Culture Center in Manila. The event served to heighten awareness of current environmental challenges and ways in which individuals can make a difference.
- Discussion on Climate Change held in New York
During the 17th UN Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) session held at the UN headquarters in New York, USA, on May 6, 2009, SGI and the CSD Education Caucus, Youth Caucus and Indigenous Peoples Cauc co-organized a panel discussion on adapting to climate change entitled "Voices from the Frontlines." Focusing on a need to combine both traditional and scientific knowledge to empower people to prepare for life in a changing environment, the event brought together perspectives from the Arctic and Africa with a report from the Indigenous Peoples' Global Summit on Climate Change.
- Climate Change Specialist Dr. Habiba Gitay Speaks at SGI-USA Center
On June 2, 2009, Dr. Habiba Gitay, senior environmental specialist at the World Bank Institute (WBI), spoke in the Culture of Peace Distinguished Speaker Series, at SGI-USA's Washington D.C. Culture Center. SGI-USA Vice General Director Bill Aiken introduced the center's rainwater collection system and rooftop garden.

4. HUMANITARIAN RELIEF

Buddhist teachings seek to alleviate all forms of suffering. Based on this ethic, SGI members have been actively engaged in various humanitarian relief activities worldwide including:

HUMANITARIAN RELIEF AND ASSISTANCE

The humanitarian relief efforts initiated by SGI include fundraising drives to facilitate provision of medical care, food, education and other services administered by relevant UN agencies and NGOs; and the donation of medical equipment to refugee camps in Eastern Nepal, Tanzania and Kosovo.

NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF

SGI organizations around the world respond to emergency situations with donations as well as delivery of relief supplies. In some countries, the local SGI organization has developed particular expertise in the assessment of needs and delivery of supplies in cooperation with the relevant local authorities.

- Flood Relief in Malaysia

In late December 2006, southwestern Malaysia experienced disastrous flooding, the worst in a hundred years. The Johor branch of Soka Gakkai Malaysia (SGM) responded by setting up emergency relief teams on the first day of the disaster. The teams were able to travel to disaster areas to deliver drinking water and relief supplies to some flood victims. By December 31, in addition to delivering emergency supplies, 200 volunteers also helped affected families clean and fix homes. SGM also donated RM 50,000 (approximately US\$14,300) to 67 families who were seriously affected.

- Wildfire Relief in Southern California, USA

SGI-USA youth took an active part in relief operations in response to wildfires that swept across southern California toward the end of October 2007 and incinerated more than 800 square miles, destroying some 2,100 homes.

SGI-USA volunteers served meals, registered evacuees, controlled traffic, ensured security and organized donation drop-off and collection.

- Flood Relief in Tabasco State, Mexico

In December 2007, SGI-Mexico youth members organized relief activities in Tabasco State, Mexico. Even two months after the flooding, many were still affected by the disaster and living at an evacuation site.

SGI-Mexico youth collected and delivered supplies such as food, drinking water and blankets to 260 families in Monal Village in Tabasco.

- Earthquake Relief in Kobe and Niigata, Japan

After the devastating earthquake in Kobe in 1995, Soka Gakkai in Japan donated over US \$2 million for the purchase of relief goods. Ten local centers were converted into evacuation centers and relief supplies were delivered by four helicopters, 1,200 trucks, 900

motorbikes and 1,350 bicycles. Many members of the Soka Gakkai doctors and nurses group volunteered their services to help the wounded.

Immediately after severe earthquakes in the Niigata region in October 2004 and July 2007, Soka Gakkai offered emergency assistance. They delivered basic necessities including food, potable water, blankets and clothing, were delivered to the affected areas, and Soka Gakkai community centers were used as emergency shelters, providing shelter and food for several days. Local members used motorbikes to visit affected areas and deliver supplies.

- Earthquake Relief in El Salvador

El Salvador suffered large-scale damage during the 7.6 magnitude earthquake that hit the Central American country in January, 2001. SGI-Mexico youth members distributed emergency items to victims, including 1,000 blankets, 500 flashlights, and 1,000 instant cup noodles.

Shortly following the quake, SGI donated US\$17,000; SGI-Taiwan US\$6,000; and other SGI affiliates also donated emergency funds to El Salvador. SGI-Mexico and SGI-Panama donated emergency items, including blankets, food, and medical supplies.

- Earthquake Relief in India

In January 2001, following a deadly 7.9-magnitude earthquake that left at least 16,000 dead in western India, a fact-finding team from Bharat Soka Gakkai (SGI-India) went to Gujarat and undertook an assessment of emergency needs at disaster sites. Based on their report, SGI-India's Women's Peace Conference, and Youth Peace Conference lead a relief effort to deliver emergency items, including food, clothing and medical supplies, to survivors in quake-devastated areas.

SGI-India's relief efforts reached 20,000 households in areas which had not yet received governmental assistance. Together with an emergency team, members distributed relief goods to affected areas, and a medical team consisting of doctors and nurses and a counseling team went to the stricken areas.

Immediately after the earthquake, Soka Gakkai in Japan donated US\$42,600 in financial aid and the SGI, US\$17,100 to purchase emergency medical and food supplies and other urgently required items for distribution through SGI-India.

- Tsunami Relief in Asia

SGI organizations worldwide responded to the need for assistance after the catastrophic tsunami that devastated large parts of Asia on December 26, 2004. The Soka Gakkai headquarters in Japan made donations of 5 million yen each (approx. US\$48,000) for relief operations to the Tokyo embassies of India and Thailand respectively. The organization also donated US\$100,000 to the government of Indonesia and US \$30,000 to Sri Lanka.

In Singapore, the Singapore Soka Association (SSA) coordinated relief activities with local NGO Mercy Relief. SSA raised S\$249,000 (approximately US\$151,000) in donations and collected 54 tons of relief items which were shipped to Sri Lanka. A further 25 tons of relief goods were sent to Aceh in Indonesia.

In Sri Lanka, the Soka Gakkai Lanka Buddhist Association (SGLBA) helped ensure that the goods reached the victims and also donated funds, and local members helped distribute food, clothing, medical supplies and other items. SSA also collaborated with SGLBA and a local NGO, Lanka Jothika Sarordaya Shramadana, to distribute 4,000 units of school kits and family packs to the affected areas.

Bharat Soka Gakkai (SGI-India) made an initial donation of 500,000 rupees (approximately US\$11,500) to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund and collected an additional 3,200,000 rupees for rehabilitation efforts such as rebuilding schools. SGI-Thailand donated seven truckloads of emergency goods in support of relief efforts in addition to sending supplies directly to affected areas.

Taiwan Soka Association donated 1 million TWD (approximately US\$31,000) to the Interior Ministry to support relief efforts. SGI-Korea donated US\$47,000 to the South East Asia Earthquake and Tsunami Relief fund launched by MBC Broadcasting. SGI-Hong Kong set up donation boxes to collect funds and raised US\$141,000 to support UNICEF's relief activities.

Soka Gakkai Malaysia (SGM) members in Kuala Lumpur and other regions set up three centers for the collection of relief items and cash donations. SGM donated approximately US\$80,000 in cash, 70,000 bottles of drinking water, 10 tons of food and 17,000 blankets to tsunami relief centers.

Bharat Soka Gakkai also looked for ways to address the longer-term nutrition and education-related needs of children in Nagapattinam, one of the worst-hit areas of Tamil Nadu, India. In 2005, the BSG Trust signed an agreement with the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) and donated 3,380,450 rupees to support children affected by the tsunami over a three-year period. Some 47 children in four villages were enrolled, all first-generation learners. Each child received food for his or her family worth 6,000 rupees per year, and a further 1,000 rupees per year to cover school costs including school fees, uniforms and supplies.

- Hurricane Katrina Relief

Following the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, SGI-USA made an initial donation of US\$10,000 to the American Red Cross. Over 50 local SGI-USA members, including evacuees whose homes in New Orleans had been flooded, joined in local efforts to provide food, water and clothing to evacuees in the various evacuation centers. SGI-USA youth also launched a toy and book collection drive for children uprooted by the disaster and over 40,000 books and toys were collected and distributed to children in shelters.

- Earthquake Relief in Pakistan

Soka Gakkai donated US\$30,000 to the President's Relief Fund for Earthquake Victims for those affected by the devastating earthquake which hit northeastern Pakistan on October 8, 2005.

- Earthquake Relief in Indonesia

On June 1, 2006, Soka Gakkai representatives donated US\$30,000 to the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Japan for earthquake relief following the severe quake which hit Central Java on May 27. The day after the quake, SGI-Indonesia members in Yogyakarta formed a motorbike team in cooperation with local residents to deliver relief supplies to affected areas which had not yet received government assistance. Members in the Central Javan city of Semarang collected basic necessities such as food, water, and sanitary supplies and sent them by truck to Yogyakarta.

- Relief Activities following Myanmar cyclone and China earthquake

Soka Gakkai organizations in Asia came to the support of the people of Myanmar and China after the cyclone disaster in Myanmar of May 2, 2008, and the devastating earthquake in China's Sichuan Province on May 12, 2008, that left tens of thousands dead in each country and many more destitute.

On May 15, Soka Gakkai President Minoru Harada visited the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo to inform Ambassador Cui Tiankai of the donation of 30 million yen (US\$287,000) to support relief and rescue efforts for victims of the earthquake.

Soka Gakkai General Director Masaaki Masaki visited the Tokyo office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on May 19 to make a donation of 3 million yen (US\$28,800) in support of relief efforts in Myanmar. UNHCR pledged that the funds would be efficiently used to buy tents to provide urgently needed shelter.

Singapore Soka Association (SSA) responded by assisting relief efforts organized by Mercy Relief, a Singapore-based organization promoting humanitarian relief and development projects in Asia. SSA's Soka Youth Center was used to coordinate relief goods purchased by Mercy Relief for Myanmar. Thirty SSA volunteers worked throughout May 9 to pack some 40 boxes of supplies including tents, water purification tablets and medical supplies, and to prepare them for shipment.

SSA also collected monetary donations and presented cheques totaling S\$195,346 (US\$143,286) to Mercy Relief in support of relief efforts for Myanmar and Sichuan, China. On May 28, more than 500 children and parents from SSA and the Ba'alwi Mosque came to the SSA headquarters to write well-wishes on message tags for children affected by the earthquake in Sichuan. The messages were attached to play packs containing toys, games and art materials.

Soka Gakkai Malaysia (SGM) branches also responded to the disasters with donations totaling 1,067,500 ringgit (US\$326,050) made to fundraising campaigns including those organized by local newspapers and the Malaysian Red Crescent Society. Blankets and other relief goods were also collected.

On May 23, the Taiwan Soka Association donated NT\$1,000,000 (US\$32,765) to the Taiwanese Ministry of the Interior for relief activities in Sichuan. In addition SGI-Macau and SGI-Hong Kong donated 200,000 pataca (US\$24,900) and HK\$300,000 (US\$39,500) respectively, in support of earthquake relief efforts.

- Taiwan Soka Association Typhoon Relief

In response to the devastation caused by Typhoon Morakot, which caused heavy flooding and landslides in the central and southern parts of Taiwan on August 7 and 8, 2009, the Taiwan Soka Association (TSA) created temporary emergency centers in five of its community centers in the cities of Tainan, Chiayi and Kaohsiung Cities, in the disaster area. Local TSA members helped rescue people from their flooded homes, distributed food and drinking water and donated first-aid materials. Others helped victims clean mud from their homes.

On August 13, TSA General Director Lin Chao donated 1,000,000 New Taiwan Dollars (US\$30,300) to Taiwan's Ministry of the Interior for relief efforts. SGI-Hong Kong made a donation of HK\$300,000 (US\$38,700) in support of Taiwanese government relief activities on August 17. On August 17, SGI-Macau also presented HK\$100,000 (US\$12,900) to the Macau Red Cross in support of relief activities in Taiwan.

Fundraising Drives:

- Fundraising in Japan

Soka Gakkai Youth Peace Conference in Japan conducted 21 fundraising and public awareness raising campaigns between 1973 and 2001, donating over US\$12 million in total to facilitate provision of medical care, food, education and other services administered by UNHCR and related organizations.

- Fundraising in Italy and in Spain

In 1993, SGI members in Italy raised funds to support refugee relief in the former Yugoslavia. SGI members in Spain also provided a relief for refugees in Rwanda.

- Fundraising in UK to Support War Child

In 1993 and 1999, SGI members in UK raised funds to support refugee relief in the former Yugoslavia. In 1997 and 1998, working with UNHCR and other organizations, the SGI supported concerts in 1997 and 1998 to support War Child, an NGO that provides medical treatment and education for children who are victims of armed conflict.

- Charity Events in Malaysia

Soka Gakkai Malaysia (SGM) regularly sponsors charity cultural events to raise funds for causes such as local orphanages, hearing- and sight-impaired treatment centers, and clinics for the treatment of people with kidney and heart disease. For example, in September 1997, SGM members held a charity fund-raising festival in the city of Kuchin in Sarawak State. The funds collected were contributed to ten of Sarawak's leading charitable organizations. In August, 2000, SGM held a charity music festival in Negri Sembilan State and the proceeds were donated to 12 philanthropic organizations. In June 2006, SGM held a Peace Charity Culture Festival commemorating the 18th anniversary of Ipoh City Day at the Stadium Indera Mulia in Ipoh, raising funds for 28 charitable organizations.

Survey Mission:

- **Survey Mission**

The Soka Gakkai Youth Peace Conference in Japan sent survey missions to investigate living conditions in refugee camps on 14 occasions between 1981 and 1999. Missions were dispatched to 15 locations, including Cambodia, Palestine, Somalia, Nepal and Kosovo.

Other Humanitarian Relief Assistance:

- **Book Donation to Schools**

As a part of Soka Gakkai's educational activities, which also include extensive free education counselling provided by trained counsellors, since 1974, book donations have been made to schools and public libraries in areas of Japan poor in educational resources such as remote islands.

After the devastating earthquake in Kobe in 1995, the committee donated books every year from 1996 to 2000 to a total of 61 elementary schools and junior high schools where large scale loss of educational resources occurred in the affected area. As of February, 2007, a total of 459,724 books on topics ranging from literature, biography, history, environment, information science and science to sports had been donated to 1044 schools throughout Japan (741 elementary schools, 216 junior high schools, 66 schools combining primary and junior high levels, and 22 public libraries).

- **"Voice Aid" Radio Collection Drive**

In response to a request by the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) Special Representative, Soka Gakkai Japan members in 1993 collected about 300,000 second-hand radios and donated them through the UNTAC to the people of Cambodia. The radios helped inform the Cambodian public about the country's first democratic elections.

- **"Books for Africa" Book Collection Drive**

The SGI has also donated thousands of books to various universities worldwide, and SGI-USA members in 1995 conducted a book drive for African schools that contributed thousands of books to various schools.

- **SGI-Austria Supports Orphaned Children**

SGI-Australia members joined bringing in their efforts to collect and distribute used computers for orphaned children in the former Yugoslavia in March, 2001.

Participation in UN Processes in Cooperation with the NGO Community:

- **UNHCR annual and thematic meetings**

SGI participates at UNHCR annual meetings on a regular basis and joins thematic meetings in Geneva, including the UNHCR/NGO Annual Consultation, the Refugee Convention Plus Forum, Standing Committee meetings, the High Commissioner for Refugees Forum, and Executive Committee meetings.

Exhibitions:

- **Exhibition in Japan**

Since 1982, Soka Gakkai Japan has sponsored exhibitions on refugee issues to raise public awareness on 21 occasions.

5. WOMEN, CHILDREN AND YOUTH

SGI promotes respect for women, children and young people and holds that they have a vital contribution to make as active participants in building a better world.

Exhibitions:

- “The Children of the World and UNICEF”
Due to curable diseases such as inflammation of the lungs and diarrhea, the lives of millions of children in developing countries are lost every year. To assure the happiness and health of children, the exhibition aimed to communicate a correct understanding of the current situation of children around the world. Held in 47 locations in Japan, the exhibition was viewed by million people during the period of 1990-1994.
- “What are Children’s Rights?”
Sponsored by UNICEF (shown in 55 locations in Japan between 1991 and 2001), this exhibition aimed to help raise awareness of the serious circumstances children face all over the world.
- “Members of the Global Family”
This exhibition was created in commemoration of the UN's International Year of the Family. This exhibition, which was shown during the period from 1994 to 2002 in several cities in Japan, showed respect for human rights and the establishment of democracy in each family through the presentation of a variety of family structures and family ties around the globe.
- “Children and a Culture of Peace”
“Children and a Culture of Peace: For the Sake of Children's Happiness," an exhibition created and sponsored by the Soka Gakkai Women's Peace Committee, was displayed on April 2-6, 2008 in Tokyo and Kobe. The exhibition supports the United Nations' "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World" (2001-2010). Exhibit panels consist of four sections titled, Children Living in Japan, Children Living on the Same Planet Earth, Brilliant Lives of Children and For the Sake of Children's Happiness, and aimed to heighten awareness among the Japanese public about the Decade's goals. The exhibition has traveled to several cities in Japan, since its launch in October 2006.
- “Treasuring the Future: Children’s Rights and Realities”
Presenting a synopsis of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, this child-friendly exhibition toured around 30 cities in the United States. It was shown in New York twice: in 1996 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of UNICEF and in 2002 during the UN Special Session on Children.
- “Children are the Future”
The exhibit – a collection of art and essays– was inspired by The United Nations 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, and was designed to create dialogue and illustrate the points in the United Nations resolution of 2002, “A World Fit For Children,” and also to support the UN’s “International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World (2001-2010)”

Seminars, Conferences and Workshops:

Seminars, discussions and lectures on youth-related issues have been hosted by SGI organizations as well as seminars and conferences on issues relevant to women in Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, India, the Philippines, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Venezuela, Japan, and the United States as well as in South Korea during the 1999 Seoul International Conference of NGOs.

- **SGI-USA Women's Peace Conferences**

In 2000, SGI-USA women members in New York held a day-long event providing feedback to local women on the proceedings of the Beijing Plus 5 conference being held at the UN Headquarters. In 2001, SGI-USA members organized the "Imagine Peace" conference in Washington DC, co-sponsored by the World Bank, American University, the United Nations Association-USA National Capital Area and other NGOs.

- **SGI-Malaysia Women's Peace Conventions**

Since 2000, SGI-Malaysia has held regular Women's Peace Conventions, often held at a local level in several different languages. The first, in 2001, had a total of 17,000 participants. In 2002, the theme was self-reflection and the women were encouraged to break through self-imposed limitations. In January 2003, members of SGI-Malaysia hosted a Women's Peace Forum on the theme of environmental protection with 3,500 participants from SGI and other groups. The theme of the 2005 Women's Peace Conference was "The Role of Women in Building Bridges of Peace Through Culture and Arts," combining an international conference, an exhibition on women and peace, and 34 local level peace meetings attended by 3,700 women.

- **Latin America Women Peace Conference**

On September 8 and 9, 2001, SGI-Argentina hosted the first SGI "Latin American Women's Peace, Culture, and Education Conference." Some 9,000 participants from 12 countries; Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Venezuela, Columbia, Peru, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Panama, Bolivia, and Chile – attended. Seminars were held in as many as 90 venues in Argentina with 64 experts, including doctors, parliamentarians and university lectures, speaking on a variety of topics such as "The Role of Women in Society", "Society and Conflict", and "Improving the Quality of Life".

- **Singapore Women's Peace Conferences**

In December 2002, the Singapore Soka Association held a Women's Peace Conference attended by 5,800 people and in June 2004, they hosted a conference on "Asian Women for Peace" which brought together peace scholars and activists and SGI women members from eight countries; Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The participants held lively discussions on "Women's Inspiration-Building a Culture of Peace"

- **SGI-Paraguay Hosts Women's Conference**

SGI-Paraguay hosted its second women's conference on peace, culture and education, on October 26, 2003 at the SGI-Paraguay Culture Center in Asunción, Paraguay. Some 400 SGI-Paraguay women and local residents attended. Many women leaders from Paraguayan society attended. The first conference was held in November, 2002.

- SGI-Bolivia, Conference of Female Educators

In 2004, SGI-Bolivia held the first conference of female educators in Cochabamba celebrating the 150th anniversary of the birth of Adela Zamudio (1854-1928), a poet, writer and educator who dedicated her life to the advancement of women. Some 750 educators from around the country attended. The conference, “Humanistic Education-The Foundation of Bolivia’s Development, “ was the first of a series of meetings in which women educators from all over Bolivia gathered to discuss common concerns.

For almost a decade, SGI-Bolivia's Women's Peace Forum (WPF) has promoted community activities aimed at improving the status of Bolivian women and has regularly organized peace gatherings. On June 22, 2008, some 360 women gathered in Santa Cruz for the first SGI-Bolivia Women's National Convention attended by Sarah Mejía Gonzales, president of the Association of Women's Civic Committees of Santa Cruz Department (CCFP).

- SGI-Australia Women Host Seminar

In 2006, SGI-Australia women hosted a seminar in Perth on April 29, focusing on children’s mental health and education, inviting Michele Toner from the Learning and Attentional Disorders Society (LADS) to talk about how mothers can cope with children suffering from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Nearly 50 women learned about ways of helping children in a multi-dimensional way rather than just prescribing drugs, and the need for good listening skills.

- Thailand Women’s Peace Conference

In 2007, SGI-Thailand (SGT) hosted “Women’s Empowerment: Network of Friendship for Peace,” the third Women for Peace Conference (WPC) in Asia. Over 50 women representatives from Singapore Soka Association (SSA), SGI-Malaysia, SGI-Cambodia and SGI-Laos joined the nearly 2,000 SGT women of all ages at the SGI Headquarters building.

- Malaysia Women’s Peace Conference

In 2007, Soka Gakkai Malaysia (SGM) women and young women hosted a women’s peace conference titled “The Role of Women in Building Bridges of Peace through Culture and Arts.” The conference, aimed at deepening an understanding of the significance and role of culture and the arts in building bridges of peace, was held at the SGM Culture Centre in Kota Kinabalu, located in the Sabah region of Malaysia, and about 900 women attended.

- Singapore Soka Association Hosts Women in Arts – Friendship for Peace Concert

In 2007, Soka Singapore Association (SSA) women and young women organized and hosted “Women in Arts—Friendship for Peace Concert,” an event geared toward expanding a network of friendship and trust in the local community, at the SSA Headquarters building. The shows displayed women’s inner strength and beauty through the performing arts and showcased the diverse talents of SSA women and their friends.

Participation in UN Processes in cooperation with the NGO Community:

- United Nations Special Session on Children
During the Special Session on Children in 2002, SGI worked with other religious NGOs and helped form the Religions Caucus, which organized a series of consultations and circulated a joint statement to the government representatives.
- Child Rights Monitoring
The Soka Gakkai Women's Peace Committee in Japan has issued reports three times on the situation of child rights in Japan in 1997, 2002, and 2007 together with other NGOs and presented them to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The first report, published in 1997, urged the establishment of a mechanism to promote human rights education.

YOUTH

Student and youth exchanges are regularly held in an effort to build the foundations of peace on a people-to-people basis, including regular exchanges between China and Japan and between various countries in Europe. In addition, SGI youth members carry out various activities to promote peace, culture and education.

- China-Japan Youth Exchange
From July 21-27, 2006, 200 Japanese Soka Gakkai youth representatives visited Shanghai, Beijing and Tianjin on an exchange visit to promote friendship between China and Japan. The Japanese and Chinese youth were able to mutually affirm that a forward-looking orientation means not averting our eyes from the truth, but to learn from our painful past so that together we can create a genuine peace. Soka Gakkai and Chinese youth delegations have been holding regular exchanges since 1985.
- Model UN General Assembly
SGI-UK's Taplow Court center regularly plays host to a "model UN General Assembly" project organized by Creative Partnerships which gives local high school children the opportunity to learn about the UN through drama and playing the roles of government delegations to the UN for a day.
- Youth Peace Forums in Latin America
SGI-Argentina has been holding annual Youth Peace Forums for high school students since 1996. SGI-Venezuela has launched a "Peacebuilders" project to prepare young people for peace work. The SGI group has partnered with the "Puentes de Paz" program involving UNHCR and UNICEF which aims to help integrate refugee children into Venezuelan society. Since 2003, SGI-Venezuela youth have organized and conducted a Peace Builder Course at various schools and universities. Some 2,600 students have attended the program in 2008.
- Youth Annual Peace Summit
On July 26, 2008, Soka Gakkai youth representatives from Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Okinawa gathered for an annual youth peace summit at the Soka Gakkai Okinawa International Peace Center in Naha, Okinawa. Soka Gakkai's respective Youth Peace Conferences (YPC) and Young Women's Peace and Culture Conferences (YWPC) from

the three prefectures have collaborated on antiwar publications, video recordings of atomic bombing and war victims' experiences as well as peace education exhibitions, lectures and surveys. The YPCs and YWPCCs aim to raise awareness regarding peace-related issues, especially among young people.

6. INTERFAITH

Based on the belief that SGI shares many core values with other religious groups and that the challenges facing humanity require us to work together to find solutions, SGI organizations in many countries regularly participate in interfaith activities focused on peace and non-violence.

Interfaith Dialogues and Conferences:

- SGI-USA Sponsors Interfaith Discussion
On November 4, 2001, a panel discussion titled "A Dialogue on Peace--An Islamic and Buddhist Perspective" took place at the SGI-USA East Los Angeles Community Center, California, USA. The panel discussion was sponsored by SGI-USA and many Muslim residents in the area were invited to discuss Islamic principles of peace, historical perspectives of extremism in Islam, Islamic perspective of women and Buddhist principles of peace.
- SGI-Mexico Attends Interfaith Conference
On November 15, 2001, SGI-Mexico representative attended an interfaith conference, "Religious Unity Toward a Culture of Peace," at the Colegio Franco Mexicano in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon State, Mexico. The conference brought together representatives of various religious denominations within Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism.
- SGI-Mexico Participates in International Conference
Centro Universitario de Integración Humanística (CUIH) (Central University of Humanistic Integration) hosted the second international conference for building healthy communities on March 14-15, 2002, under the theme, "Security for All," in Mexico City, Mexico. Some 1,000 from the legal, educational and religious fields participated. SGI-Mexico youth represented Buddhism and exchanged ideas and opinions on the role of religion in achieving peace. Christians, Jews, Muslims and Buddhists participated.
- SGI-Germany Interfaith Peace Discussion
In September 2002, SGI-Germany sponsored an interfaith discussion on peace which brought together representatives of the Christian, Islamic and Buddhist traditions, followed by a multicultural music and dance festival.
- SGI Supports EASA's Interfaith Dialogues Series
On October 24, 2003, SGI supported the ninth interfaith dialogue hosted by European Academy of Sciences and Arts (EASA), titled "The Conception of Men," at the EASA headquarters in Salzburg, Austria. SGI has been supporting the EASA's series of interfaith dialogue since 1997 covering such topics as environmental problems and human rights.
- SGI-USA Women Promote Interfaith Dialogue
In June 2003, SGI-USA women members in Long Island, New York, organized an interfaith peace conference entitled, "Changing the Tides: Let's Resolve Conflict Through Dialogue."
- SGI-USA Hosts Interfaith Conference

In July 2004, SGI-USA hosted the NAIN and NAEIS joint annual conference, an interfaith conference and film festival at its New York Culture Center. Topics debated included the role of faith-based organizations in combating racism, and public policy and the UN.

- SGI Canada Representatives Participate in Annual World Religions Conference
On October 2, 2004, the 24th World Religions Conference was held at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. Attendees included religious scholars, representatives of diverse faiths and some 700 local residents. With this year's theme, "Why Religion?" representatives from Christianity, Judaism, Aboriginal Spirituality, Sikhism, Hinduism, Islam, Atheism and Buddhism, discussed the need for religion in the present day, based on their respective views. Representing Buddhism, SGI-Canada representatives participated.
- SGI-Bolivia Participate in Interfaith Forum
On November 29, 2004, SGI-Bolivia representatives participated in an interfaith forum discussing how religions can contribute to peace building. Nur University, Bolivia, hosted the forum titled, "Religions and Their Role in Peace building," attended by representatives of Islam, Baha'i, Buddhism and Christianity, at the university campus in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.
- SGI-Spain Representative Chairs Symposium at Parliament of the World's Religions
The Parliament of the World's Religions, a major event of the "Universal Forum of Cultures--Barcelona 2004" in Barcelona, Spain, was held from July 7 to 13, 2004. Nearly 8,000 people from different religious groups attended the one-week conference. On July 13, a symposium entitled "The Voices of Different Religions Traditions for Peace" took place. An SGI-Spain representative chaired the symposium.
- SGI-Australia Interfaith Activities
In August 2004, SGI-Australia and Pax Christi co-hosted an interfaith peace forum in Melbourne entitled "Interfaith Responses to Terrorism—Building a Peaceful World" and in October the same year, SGI-Australia, two local Islamic groups and the Uniting Church of Australia hosted a conference in Sydney on "Race, Religion and Rhetoric."
- SGI-Argentina Youth Interfaith Event
SGI-Argentina youth hosted an interfaith dialogue on building a culture of peace in August 2004. Representatives of Catholic, Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist traditions participated.
- Pacific Islands Peace Conference on Guam Island
On January 14, 2005 in Tumon, Guam, SGI organized together with the Martin Luther King Jr. Human Rights Commission and the Indian Community of Guam, the second Pacific Islands Peace Conference, titled "Humanistic Education Fostering a Culture of Peace." The forum brought together educators and religious leaders representing the diverse cultures of Guam and the South Pacific to share ideas about peace building through education.
- SGI-Hong Kong Hosts Interfaith Seminar
SGI-Hong Kong hosted an interfaith seminar, titled "Unity and Diversity: How I Accommodate Other Religious Traditions in My Own Beliefs," at the SGI-Hong Kong

Culture Center in May, 2005. Christian, Buddhist, Muslim and Jewish representatives spoke about their organizations' ideals and engagement within society. Participants also held group discussions on various topics, such as the environment, terrorism and security issues.

- SGI-UK Hosts Seminar on Faith Groups and ESD
In 2006, SGI-UK collaborated with DEA (Development Education Associates) in the UK to host a one-day seminar on “Active Faith: Global Citizenship and Learning for the Future,” looking at the role of faith groups in education for global citizenship and sustainability in the UK.
- SGI-UK Hosts Interfaith Conference
On June 21, 2006, SGI-UK hosted an interfaith conference at Taplow Court. The 30 participants represented Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist traditions as well as international nongovernmental organizations, including Save the Children. Attendees held active discussions on resolving global issues, such as epidemics; war and conflicts; and environmental destruction.
- SGI Participate in World Public Forum Dialogue of Civilizations
The World Public Forum (WPF) held its fourth general meeting of “Dialogue of Civilizations” in Rhodes, Greece, from September 27 through October 1, 2006. Representatives of SGI and the Institute of Oriental Philosophy (IOP), an affiliated organization, joined over 600 scholars and researchers from 62 countries to discuss peace and intercultural dialogue.
- International Interfaith Roundtable Forum in New Zealand
On February 13, 2008, SGI-New Zealand hosted an international interfaith roundtable forum in Wellington entitled "The Role of Interfaith Dialogue in Building Bridges Towards Peace and Security," cosponsored by Victoria University of Wellington and the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs. Over 60 people attended, including representatives from the embassies of the U.S.A., U.K., Russia, Pakistan, Thailand, Singapore, Australia and Spain, together with civil society representatives, academics, government officials, interfaith leaders and university students. An SGI representative spoke, representing SGI as well as the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN.
- SGI-USA Participates in Interfaith Roundtable on Hate Crimes in USA
On June 26, 2008, in a suburb of Los Angeles (LA), California, USA, the LA County Human Relations Commission hosted an interfaith roundtable on hate crimes. The commission's Executive Director Robin Toma invited 33 leaders representing a broad diversity of faith communities, including SGI-USA.
- Singapore Soka Association Participates in Interfaith Forum
An interfaith forum titled "From Tolerance to Acceptance," was held on August 30, 2008, at the Tampines West Community Club in Singapore. Speakers included Associate Professor Syed Farid Alatas from the Department of Malay Studies at the National University of Singapore Singapore Soka Association (SSA) Vice General Director Chan Heng Yuen and Executive Director Laurence Wee of the Presbyterian Community Services.

The event was sponsored by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports and organized by the Tampines West Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circle (IRCC).

- Soka Gakkai Malaysia Participates in Interfaith Prayer for Peace

On September 12, 2008, Soka Gakkai Malaysia (SGM) was invited by the Catholic Church of St. Francis of Assisi (SFA), Cheras, Malaysia, to participate in the interfaith event "Understanding World Religions." SFA organized the event to promote greater understanding of the various faith traditions in the country. Along with SGM, Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), Hindu Sangam, Buddhist Maha Vihara and the Sikh community participated. Representatives from various faiths took turns to pray in their own tradition for the peace of the nation.

- Parliament of the World's Religions Pre-Events Held in USA and Spain

On April 19, 2009, SGI-USA's World Peace Ikeda Auditorium in Santa Monica, California, hosted the Los Angeles Pre-Parliament Event of the Southern California Committee for a Parliament of the World's Religions (SCCPWR). The event, attended by 300 people representing 20 religious groups, was part of the preparations for the fifth Parliament of the World's Religions to be held in Melbourne, Australia, in December 2009.

On June 14, the fourth Catalan Parliament of Religions took place at the University of Lleida (UdL: Universitat de Lleida) in Lleida, Catalonia, Spain, as a pre-event for the Parliament of the World's Religions. The UNESCO Association of Lleida organized the event, which was co-hosted by many other organizations including SGI-Spain.

As the opening event for the Catalan Parliament of Religions, between April 28 and May 16, "The Lotus Sutra--A Message of Peace and Harmonious Coexistence" exhibition was shown at the Lleida Public Library in Lleida, cosponsored by the University of Lleida, UNESCO Association of Lleida, the Institute of Oriental Philosophy (IOP) and the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and supported by SGI-Spain.

Participation in UN Processes in cooperation with the NGO Community:

- Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations

The Committee is composed of the representatives of religious, spiritual or ethical NGOs. Since 1972, the Committee has been meeting regularly to share information and insights about issues and events at the United Nations. Serving in the Bureau of the Committee since 1999, the SGI helps organize activities such as monthly briefings. SGI's UN representative in New York served as President of the Committee from 2004 to 2007.

- Interfaith Service for the Opening of UN General Assembly

On September 14, 2004, the Annual Interfaith Service for the Opening of the United Nations General Assembly took place in New York. Attendees included UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Mrs. Nane Annan, President of the 59th session of the UN General Assembly Jean Ping and many UN Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) representatives. SGI's UN representative in New York spoke at the gathering, representing the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN.

- Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace

The Forum is an innovative partnership of UN system organizations, Member States and civil society organizations on interfaith dialogue and cooperation for peace. Launched in March 2006, the Forum has been joined by fifteen UN system organizations including UNESCO and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, fifty governments and many NGOs coordinated by the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN.

Two major conferences have been organized so far. The first was on June 2005, attended by more than 400 representatives from the UN, governments, and civil society. The President of the General Assembly and other senior UN officials also participated. The second was a high-level conference on September 2006 where the General Assembly President, the President of Senegal, and the Foreign Secretary of the Philippines participated.

The SGI has been actively participating in the Forum since its inception, and as President of the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN, SGI's representative spoke at both conferences on behalf of civil society.

- SGI-USA Representative Speaks at Interfaith Event During UN Commission on the Status of Women

On March 1, 2006, the Temple of Understanding, a nongovernmental organization accredited with the UN, hosted a lecture on "Religion and Global Citizenship" in New York. This event was an official parallel event of the 50th session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN headquarters. Some 70 individuals attended, including government officials and UN and NGO representatives. With a theme, "Women in Leadership: Religion, Vocation, and Identity," women from four religious traditions-- Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism, discussed their roles as global citizens and how gender and faith influence their efforts for peace and social justice. An SGI representative was one of the four panelists.

- High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Cooperation and Understanding for Peace

The General Assembly convened the first-ever High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Cooperation and Understanding for Peace on October 4 and 5, 2007. An SGI representative served on the Civil Society Task Force which consisted of representatives from relevant UN offices and NGO committees.