The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is a community-based Buddhist organization that promotes peace, culture and education centered on respect for the dignity of life. SGI members uphold the humanistic philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism in 192 countries and territories around the world.

Individual SGI members strive to actualize their inherent potential while contributing as empowered global citizens to their local communities and responding to the shared issues facing humankind. The SGI's efforts to help build a lasting culture of peace are based on a commitment to dialogue and nonviolence, and the understanding that individual happiness and the realization of a peaceful world are inextricably linked.

As a nongovernmental organization with formal ties to the United Nations, the SGI also collaborates with other civil society organizations, intergovernmental agencies and faith groups in the fields of nuclear disarmament, human rights education, sustainable development and humanitarian relief.

The SGI's peace activities are based on the following key elements deriving from Buddhist philosophy:

**Belief in the dignity of life**
All people inherently possess a life-state of ultimate dignity and in this sense are fundamentally equal and have limitless potential.

**The interconnectedness of all life**
An awareness of the interrelatedness and inseparability of one's own life and those of others can help put an end to discriminatory attitudes and destructive behavior toward others and the environment.

**Reflection, dialogue and nonviolence**
Inner reflection enables us to feel the suffering of others as our own. Through dialogue, we strengthen mutual understanding and aim to join with others in a stand against violence and the taking of life.
The SGI’s nuclear abolition efforts trace their roots back to 1957, when second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda (1900–58) made a public declaration calling for the elimination and prohibition of nuclear weapons. The SGI has been working toward realizing a world free from nuclear weapons and the creation of a culture of peace through a number of initiatives and events, including the latest exhibition “Everything You Treasure— For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons.”

The SGI promotes sustainable living through various educational efforts. It has organized events and exhibitions around the world, including “Seeds of Hope,” which was a joint initiative between the SGI and the Earth Charter International (ECI) in support of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–14).

The SGI has been engaged in humanitarian relief activities over the years, taking advantage of its unique strengths and capabilities as a faith-based organization (FBO). During the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015, the SGI organized side events sharing the Soka Gakkai’s continued relief efforts following the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011.

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. The SGI is engaging in activities to advance human rights education in support of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005–ongoing) and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011).

Gender equality and the empowerment of each individual are integral to the Buddhist philosophy of the SGI, which upholds the inherent dignity and equality of all human beings. The SGI supports the activities of UN Women and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) by working with other like-minded groups through organizing events and actively participating in the NGO Committee on the Status of Women.
SGI Welcomes ICAN Leaders

On January 17, Soka Gakkai President Minoru Harada welcomed the leaders of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)—the 2017 Nobel Peace Prizewinning organization—Executive Director Beatrice Fihn and International Steering Group Member Akira Kawasaki, who visited the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Tokyo.

In the meeting, Fihn said that the circumstances surrounding nuclear weapons had entered a new stage after the adoption of the TPNW. She mentioned two priorities: securing early entry into force of the TPNW, and engaging countries which do not join the treaty. She also pointed out the important role that faith-based organizations can play in influencing how people look at nuclear weapons.

On June 5, in Rome, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel and SGI President Daisaku Ikeda released a joint appeal titled “To the Youth of the World: An Appeal for Resilience and Hope,” calling for a new world built on justice and solidarity.

In the appeal, they stressed the critical role of empowered young people in transforming history. They also mentioned the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2017 as a significant advance, stating: “In pursuing the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, we must eliminate not only the threat these weapons pose, but also the urge to power and the desire to realize security for one’s own country even at the expense of the lives and the dignity of other peoples. There is an urgent need to disarm our ways of thinking.”

Read the appeal: https://www.daisakuikeda.org/sub/resources/works/lect/20180605-esquivel-ikeda-jt-appeal.html
Faith Groups Call for Urgent Action toward Nuclear Ban

On April 21–22, SGI participated in the ICAN Campaigners Meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland, prior to the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference (NPT PrepCom). SGI Executive Director of Peace and Global Issues Kazuo Ishiwatari exchanged views with ICAN Executive Director Beatrice Fihn on their future cooperation toward the shared goal of the abolition of nuclear weapons.

On April 25, at one of the civil society presentations during the NPT PrepCom, an interfaith statement was delivered by Hayley Ramsay-Jones of SGI on behalf of Faith Communities Concerned about Nuclear Weapons, highlighting the moral and ethical imperatives for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Signatories included 20 groups and individuals from different faiths, including Christian, Muslim, and Hindu traditions, and SGI. SGI also made public a statement to the NPT PrepCom handed over by Ishiwatari to Ambassador Adam Bugajski, chair of the second session of the NPT PrepCom.

On October 16, Faith Communities Concerned about Nuclear Weapons presented a joint statement to the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly First Committee in New York. It is the 10th of its kind since the group issued its first statement in Washington DC in April 2014. The following day, Ishiwatari met with Marissa Edwards (Guyana), vice-chair of the UN General Assembly First Committee, to hand over the interfaith statement as well as SGI’s public statement on disarmament addressed to the UN General Assembly. SGI’s statement highlights fears about Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems or LAWS.

Read the interfaith statement:

Read SGI’s public statement:

SGI Joins in Welcoming UN Disarmament Agenda

On May 24, UN Secretary-General António Guterres announced his new disarmament agenda titled, “Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament” in Geneva. In response to the secretary-general’s agenda, an interfaith statement was issued on behalf of a wide variety of religious organizations to support the appeal by the secretary-general. The statement, which the NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security in New York played a central role in issuing, is endorsed by groups of Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist traditions, including SGI.
Symposium on Gender Perspectives in Security Discourse

On September 22, the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee, with support from the Embassy of Costa Rica, organized a symposium in Tokyo which was titled “Do They Really Protect Everything You Treasure?—Looking at Nuclear Weapons from Humanitarian and Gender Perspectives.” In one of SGI’s events in the run-up to the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on September 26, Her Excellency Laura Esquivel Mora, ambassador of Costa Rica, delivered the keynote speech outlining why nuclear disarmament matters today, as any detonation of nuclear weapons would cause catastrophic humanitarian impacts and have a disproportionate effect on women and girls, partly as a result of ionizing radiation.

Panel Discussion on Peace and Disarmament Education

On February 1 in Turin, Italy, Senzatomica, an Italian campaign for the abolition of nuclear weapons, held a panel discussion titled “Educare alla Pace e al Disarmo - Incontro con ICAN Premio Nobel per la Pace 2017” (Peace and Disarmament Education—Conference with ICAN, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2017). The panel took place after a public guided tour of SGI's exhibition From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace: Toward a World Free From Nuclear Weapons.

Panel speakers included Hayley Ramsay-Jones, director of the Geneva Liaison Office of the SGI Office for UN Affairs; Daniel Högsta, network coordinator of ICAN; Francesco Vignarca, Italian Disarmament Network; Massimo Artini, vice chair of the Defense Committee of the Italian Parliament; Daniele Santi, secretary general of Senzatomica and journalist Alberto Simoni who moderated the panel. The Mayor of Turin, Dr. Chiara Appendino and other government officials from the region, the deans of Turin and the Polytechnic University of Turin, as well as approximately 250 people, attended.

Inter-Agency Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding Meeting

On January 18 in New York, SGI participated in a meeting of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding where Anna Ikeda of the SGI Office for UN Affairs made a presentation on a thematic paper on youth and nuclear disarmament. The paper was one of two thematic papers that SGI had submitted to the UN last year in contribution to the “Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security.” The meeting was attended by representatives of more than 20 groups, including the Peacebuilding Support Office, UNICEF, UNESCO, UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, IOM, and Alliance on Civilizations.

In March 2018, a report The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security was published. This study was mandated by the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. SCR 2250 is the first resolution fully dedicated to the important and positive role young women and men play in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.
Human Security and the Role of Faith Communities

On October 10–11, SGI attended the sixth meeting of the Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions held in Astana, Kazakhstan. President Nursultan Nazarbayev made a keynote speech which was followed by presentations by representatives of various religions. Hirotsugu Terasaki, SGI director general of Peace and Global Issues, talked about the Buddhist perspective in his presentation titled “Human Security and the Role of Faith Communities.”

UN High-Level Forum on the Culture of Peace

The high-level forum was convened by the 72nd president of the General Assembly in cooperation with the Global Movement for the Culture of Peace (GMCoP). SGI helped to organize the forum as a core member of GMCoP.

In his opening statement, the president of the General Assembly, Mr. Miroslav Lajcak spoke of the culture of peace being embedded in every word of the UN Charter. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Rigoberta Menchu Tum delivered the keynote address followed by statements from 42 governments and observers to the UN at the General Assembly Hall.

The afternoon session consisted of a panel of governments, UN experts, academics and civil society who spoke on the theme “The Culture of Peace: A Credible Pathway to Sustaining Peace.” Next year will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

Collaboration with Partners

On September 24, the Japan NGO Network for Nuclear Weapons Abolition, an antinuclear NGO network of which the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee is a member, hosted an event on disarmament education with the support of the United Nations Information Centre at Meiji University in Tokyo. The panelists included Nobuharu Imanishi, Foreign Ministry disarmament chief, Masako Toki, education project manager and research associate at Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, and Mitsuki Kudo, member of the Nagasaki Youth Delegation.

On November 5–8 at the 2nd World Forum on Urban Violence and Education for Coexistence and Peace—which was convened by Mayor Manuela Carmena in Madrid, Spain—ICAN launched the newly created “ICAN Cities Appeal” which can be endorsed by towns and cities around the world, especially those in countries that have not yet signed and ratified the TPNW. Also at the conference SGI helped to organize a workshop with the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, social injustice issues, and intersectionality. SGI also worked with ICAN to display the exhibition Everything you Treasure—For a World Free of Nuclear Weapons at the venue.

On November 16–18, the SGI-ICAN exhibition Everything You Treasure—For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons was shown at the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. The exhibition was held as a side event at the Sixth Nagasaki Global Citizens’ Assembly for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. The assembly has been held every few years since 2000, organized by the executive committee which consists mainly of Nagasaki prefectural and city government officials and peace organization members.
The SGI-ICAN antinuclear exhibition Everything You Treasure—For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons has been showcased in many venues worldwide. The exhibition was created with the aim of reexamining the issue of nuclear weapons from 12 different perspectives, including humanitarian, environmental, economic, human rights, spiritual, and gender. As of December 2018, the exhibition has been shown in 90 cities in 20 countries since its launch in 2012.

Exhibition highlights in 2018 include a showing at the 10th IPPNW North Asia Regional Conference which opened on September 13 in Ulanbaatar, Mongolia. The two-day conference welcomed about 100 participants not only from countries in Asia and the Pacific but also from Europe.

In addition, the exhibition was held for the first time in Shibuya, Tokyo on September 21. The opening welcomed 12 diplomatic delegations in Tokyo and His Excellency Seiko Ishikawa, ambassador of Venezuela, who delivered his remarks. Ms. Masako Wada, assistant secretary-general of the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations, shared her thoughts and feelings as a hibakusha, stressing that, far from assuring security, the continued possession of nuclear weapons leads to catastrophic humanitarian consequences.

Selected List of Venue Showings in 2018:

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Osaka, Japan</td>
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<td>May</td>
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<td>Nagasaki, Japan</td>
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Asia Pacific Faith-Based Coalition for Sustainable Development

On March 28, five faith-based organizations consisting of World Vision International, ACT Alliance, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Arigatou International, and SGI organized a launch event of a new network called the Asia Pacific Faith-Based Coalition for Sustainable Development (APFC) at the Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD) in Bangkok.

On August 31, the APFC held a roundtable in Tokyo to discuss the role of faith and faith-based organizations in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with key figures from the Japanese development and faith communities. It was cosponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Japan Civil Society Network on SDGs, the Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC), and the Japan Religion Coordinating Project for Disaster Relief.

Rome-Assisi Conference on Spirituality & Sustainability

From May 24 to June 1, SGI cosponsored the Rome-Assisi Conference on Spirituality & Sustainability. The programs included a lecture and dialogue with Cardinal Peter Turkson, discussions on the Earth Charter as a key contribution to global ethics, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the wisdom traditions of world religions and indigenous spiritualities. SGI provided the exhibition panels from the Seeds of Hope: Visions of Sustainability, Steps toward Change exhibition which was on display. Hiro Sakurai, director of the SGI Office for UN Affairs, delivered a presentation on the Earth Charter and SGI's engagement with it, introducing SGI's nonformal education tools including the Seeds of Hope exhibit, a 30-minute film *A Quiet Revolution* and a mobile app Mapting.

Soka Institute-Amazon Environmental Research Center

The Soka Institute-Amazon Environmental Research Center is located near Manaus, Brazil, in the middle reaches of the Amazon River. It focuses on environmental education based on the Earth Charter principles and the SDGs, and aims to help local communities realize the relevance of the Amazon forest in a global context.

The institute has promoted environmental education for school children, youth and adults, using local natural resources and the sustainable practices of the institute as pedagogic tools. Demand is increasing, and in 2018 around 1,000 students from 12 schools in Manaus took part.

The institute has also developed joint projects involving planting seedlings of Amazonian tree species with several entities including private companies. Since 2017, the Environmental Court of the Amazonas State and the institute have planted a tree for every child born in the Moura Tapajós Maternity Hospital. The number amounts to 1,500. The institute also has a project with the Federal University of Amazonas on “Environmental Literacy for Society.”
ECI and SGI commemorated a three-year celebration of the SDGs promoting an app called Mapting, which was launched in November 2016, with the aim of transforming the world using the framework of the SDGs and the Earth Charter principles. Both believe that this application is valuable in educating young people, inspiring them into action, and creating partnerships among its users.

To walk you through Mapting step by step and to help you to enjoy it a Mapting user guide has been created:

http://earthcharter.org/virtual-library2/mapting-use-guide/

On April 3–5, the exhibition titled “Seeds of Hope: Visions of Sustainability, Steps toward Change,” a colorful display showing how one person’s actions can make a difference, was shown at the Headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome. The 24-panel exhibition, a joint initiative of SGI and Earth Charter International (ECI), was one of the official side events of the Second International Symposium on Agroecology organized by FAO.

The main speaker at the opening ceremony was FAO Deputy Director-General for Climate and Natural Resources Maria Helena Semedo, who commented, “We at FAO often focus on larger-scale actions, but this exhibition reminds us that many times scale starts at the individual level. I am inspired by the real-life testimonials in this exhibit.” Other speakers included Apostolic Nuncio H.E. Silvano M. Tomási, ECI Council Member Alide Roerink and SGI Director General of Peace and Global Issues Hirotsugu Terasaki.
SGI Attends Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

From 3 to 6 July, SGI attended the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) held in Mongolia with the theme of “Preventing Disaster Risk, Protecting Sustainable Development.” On July 5, SGI delivered a presentation at the Ignite Stage on the role of faith-based organizations in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).

On the same day, the Asia Pacific Faith-based Coalition for Sustainable Development (APFC), which SGI has joined as an official member, held an official side event on the topic of the “Role of Faith Based Organizations and Local Faith Communities in DRR.” The APFC concluded their discussion in the joint statement which was submitted to the conference secretariat on the following day.

On July 4, an official side event on cultural heritage and DRR was organized by India’s National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). SGI presented on how religious heritages and buildings have served as shelters and bases for people’s recoveries after disasters in Japan.

Relief Activities in Japan and Taiwan

On February 6 2017, a magnitude 6.4 earthquake hit Hualien City of Taiwan. In response to the city government’s request, the Taiwan Soka Association (TSA) immediately set up a relief control center at its community center to support volunteers in coordination with the government and continued to deliver food to aid workers. On March 4, the TSA co-organized a seminar on the management of survivor stress together with the city government.

At the beginning of July heavy rain hit western Japan. In some areas landslides and floods took place affecting more than two hundred people. A couple of days after the rain local Soka Gakkai organizations started to dispatch volunteer workers to the areas. Some hundreds of members conducted relief activities in Okayama Prefecture, Hiroshima Prefecture and Ehime Prefecture. They promoted cleanups of the affected people’s homes, helped them to go to hospitals, and assisted them in moving to new housing.
SGI Attends Academic Conference on Disasters

From July 17 to 19 the Global Conference on the International Network of Disaster Studies was held in Morioka, Japan. It was co-organized by three research centers from Iwate University, Tsinghua University, and Harvard Kennedy School.

On July 18 Mitsuaki Niinuma, manager of the Soka Gakkai Tohoku Recovery Project, delivered a presentation titled “The Strength of a Local Faith-Based Network Found in the Great East Japan Earthquake: A Case Study from Soka Gakkai in Miyagi Prefecture.”

He stressed that local entities with strong networks can easily promote relief activities and they should be further involved in the DRR frameworks within each community. Participants discussed how to promote collaboration among faith-based organizations and other stakeholders.

In addition, a thesis on the issue written by Nobuyuki Asai, SGI director of Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Affairs, was published by the *Journal of Disaster Research* (Vol. 13, No.7). It analyzed the relief activities undertaken by Soka Gakkai communities and a Muslim community from the perspective of social capital.

Film Screening and Painting Exhibition on Refugees

On June 23, a film screening event was held by the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee, supported by Japan for UNHCR, in Kobe, Japan, commemorating World Refugee Day on June 20. After the screening, a presentation on the current situation of refugees around the world was delivered by Mr. Shoichi Yoshijima, manager from Japan for UNHCR.

About 300 citizens joined the event and gave feedback afterwards. One of the participants commented, “The film made me think how we could take in those with a background of a different culture, religion, and language. I became keenly aware of the necessity to create a society with understanding and respect for differences.”

On December 8, an exhibition *We Dream to Be Able to Continue to Dream—Paintings by Refugee Children* opened in Kobe. It displays 76 paintings by refugee children from Syria, Palestine, South Sudan, Myanmar, Columbia, and Venezuela, collected through different NGOs. Panels depicting the refugee situation were also displayed.
Activities during UN Human Rights Council

During the 37th session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva in March, the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning (NGO WG on HREL), which SGI is a part of, submitted a written statement “Proposals for the Focus of the 4th Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education.” The statement included SGI’s proposal that youth should be the target sector for the fourth phase. This was in response to a call by HRC and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) seeking the views of all relevant stakeholders on what should be the target sectors, focus areas and thematic human rights issues in preparation for the fourth phase.

On March 6, the NGO WG on HREL also organized a side event at the Palais de Nations, cosponsored by the Platform for Human Rights Education and Training and the UNESCO Liaison Office in Geneva. The panel enabled various stakeholders to share their views on the event topic: “World Programme for Human Rights Education—What Focus for the Fourth Phase?” and also provided an opportunity to address the progress and challenges in the ongoing third phase of the world programme, which aims to strengthen the implementation of the first two phases and promote human rights training for media professionals and journalists. Speakers included representatives from UNESCO, OHCHR, the Permanent Mission of Italy, as well as national human rights institutions, and civil society.

On September 14, a joint oral statement titled “Focus of the Fourth Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education” was delivered by Elisa Gazzotti of SGI and co-chair of the NGOWG on HREL during the 39th session of the Human Rights Council on behalf of 21 organizations. The statement remarked that youth are critical agents of change and it is essential to empower them through human rights education to become active global citizens, ultimately contributing to building inclusive societies, overcoming social divides, hatred and discrimination and aiming at the lofty objective of the UN of leaving no one behind. It also emphasized the importance for the fourth phase of the world programme to build on previous phases, to ensure the clear accountability of states and to set realistic goals and means for national actions involving all stakeholders, including civil society actors.

Proposal on World Programme for Human Rights Education

On May 2, SGI submitted a paper proposing youth as a target sector in response to an OHCHR questionnaire which sought the views of relevant stakeholders for the focus of the 4th phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education. SGI mentioned the youth as “critical agents of change” who will shape the future and suggested that human rights education for youth should be implemented not only through formal education but through nonformal education also in order to support and enhance the aim of universal access for all youth to human rights education.

New Website on Human Rights Education Launched

Commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 2018, a new website was developed by SGI, HRE 2020, NGOWG on HREL, and the States Platform for Human Rights Education and Training with thanks to OHCHR. The website was introduced by SGI at a side event of the 39th session of the UN Human Rights Council which was organized by the NGOWG on HREL, with the cosponsorship of the States Platform on Human Rights Education and Training (comprising Brazil, Costa Rica, Italy, Morocco, the Philippines, Senegal, Slovenia, and Thailand) and the cosponsorship of the UNESCO Geneva Liaison Office in Geneva.

The website provides useful resources in the hope that the users, especially youth, can acquire new perspectives and knowledge to realize their rights and promote a better future and environment in their own immediate communities. It is also a strong hope that it will be used by teachers and NGO activists who are conducting human rights education and training.

The 25-panel exhibition Transforming Lives: The Power of Human Rights Education and the 28-minute movie A Path to Dignity: The Power of Human Rights Education, as well as other useful information and tools, are available on the website: https://www.power-humanrights-education.org/
Event on Human Rights Education at 9th ICHRE

On November 29, SGI organized an event on human rights education for youth during the 9th International Conference on Human Rights Education (ICHRE) held at the Western Sydney University in Australia. The 9th ICHRE was held from November 26 to 29 under the title of “Unleashing the Full Potential of Civil Society” and marked the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the 25th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration which highlights the value of human rights education.

The theme of SGI’s event was “Building Inclusive Societies: Empowering Youth to Foster Global Citizenship through Human Rights Education” and some 50 people attended. The panel was moderated by Elisa Gazzotti of SGI and co-chair of the NGOWG on HREL, and speakers included: Ian Hamilton, executive director, Equitas · International Centre for Human Rights Education, Canada; Jessie Watson, Western Sydney University; Arash Bordbar, Global Youth Advisory Council; Apajok Biar, South Sudan Voices of Salvation; and Cynthia Veliko, regional representative, OHCHR Regional Office for Southeast Asia.

During the event, two young refugees from Iran and Kenya shared their powerful experiences as refugees and how human rights education has helped them transform their lives for the better and enabled them to become human rights activists in Australia where they have managed to create new lives for themselves. Their presentations were followed by group discussions, each of them facilitated by a young person, where the participants exchanged views on the importance of human rights education for and with youth, and shared good practices and ways to measure the effectiveness of such human rights education.

During the conference the SGI exhibition Transforming Lives: The Power of Human Rights Education was also displayed.

Youth Forum Marks 70th Anniversary of UDHR

On December 9, a youth forum promoting human rights was held in Tokyo in order to mark the 70th anniversary of the UDHR on December 10. The event was coordinated by a committee of representatives from Amnesty International Japan, Human Rights Now, Human Rights Watch, the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) and the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee. It was also supported by the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Tokyo.

After the screening of the video message addressed to the UN Human Rights Day on December 10 from UN Secretary-General António Guterres, Atsushi Shibuya, an award-winning photojournalist, presented the reality of people in conflict and disaster zones through his work. He expressed his hope that a world in which people can fully develop their own unique qualities and enjoy the equality as stipulated by the UDHR can be realized.

Moderated by Kaoru Nemoto, director of the UNIC Tokyo, a panel of six experts explored how the UDHR had impacted people in Japan from differing perspectives including those of minority groups and young people. The speakers included: Hideaki Nakagawa, executive director of Amnesty International Japan; Hiroshi Fukuda, trustee and senior researcher at the Center for Human Rights Education and Training; Katsutoshi Okubo, president of the Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability; Kazuko Ito, secretary general of Human Rights Now; Riyo Yoshioka, senior program officer at Human Rights Watch Asia Division and Megumi Komori, acting secretary-general of IMADR.

The Exhibition Transforming Lives: The Power of Human Rights Education was also shown during the forum.
May’s monthly NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York (NGO CSW/NY) meeting, held at the Church Center for the United Nations, was moderated by Ivy Koek of SGI and organized together with the Young Professionals Subcommittee. The meeting was titled, “An Intergenerational Discussion on the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2018: Transformation toward Sustainable and Resilient Societies and the New Phase of the Global Women’s Movement,” and focused on the gender dimensions of the seven Sustainable Development Goals that were reviewed at the HLPF in July.

Speakers included Bani Dugal, Baha’i International community principle representative and former chair of CSW/NY; Azadeh Khalili first executive director of New York’s Commission on Gender Equity, NGO CSW/NY executive committee member and long-time women’s human rights advocate and Ala Oueslati, Women Deliver young leader and feminist activist. The intergenerational discussion started with the inspiration of the fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 when the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted by Member States and ended with sharing thoughts on where the women’s movement is headed and how it’s headed there—with social media playing an increasing role in activism.

Young Women’s Leadership in Peace and Security

The NGO CSW/NY September monthly meeting was a follow-up to the one held in 2017 which looked at the role of young women in the interlinked UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (SCR1325) and 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (SCR2250). The panel, co-moderated by Ivy Koek of SGI and Azi Khalili, UN representative for the International Alliance of Women, consisted of three speakers: Megan Manion, UN Women policy analyst, Marina Kumskova, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and Women, Peace and Security program associate, and Mallika Iyer, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) program officer, all women under the age of 30.

During the discussions, UN Women spoke of their efforts to ensure young women’s meaningful participation at the UN such as including young women in events within the peace and security space and highlighting the contributions of young women in the area of peace and security. They placed special focus on young women in the UN Secretary General’s report on SCR1325 and contributed a paper for the Progress Report on Youth, Peace and Security. Toward the 20th anniversary of SCR1325, in the year 2020, UN Women hopes to collect more disaggregated data to show the important role of young women in peacebuilding. The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), a 103-year old organization and the longest running women’s peace organization, has been working to change power structures in order to change the current structures of violence. Their aim is to tackle the root causes of violence with a feminist approach. Several examples of best practice were given, one such example was about a group in Kenya engaging young people through social media tools and apps to raise awareness and engage the youth in their country on the topic of peace and security. GNWP is running a Young Women for Peace and Leadership program in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Philippines, Indonesia, and South Sudan. They provide leadership trainings, literacy, and promote peacebuilding and economic empowerment.

After a question and answer session the audience broke up into four discussion groups, organized by the four pillars of the SCR1325 and facilitated by the various speakers.

This was the first monthly meeting NGO CSW/NY livestreamed. The video can be found on the Committee’s Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/NGOCSWNY/videos/549036022202652/
The SGI was registered as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) associated with the UN Department of Public Information in 1981 and was granted consultative status with the Economic and Social Council in 1983. It was also listed as an NGO in cooperation with UNHCR in 1997. SGI maintains offices in New York and Geneva.

The SGI was an early proponent of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-14) and played an active role in the UN process for the realization of the World Programme for Human Rights Education which was launched in 2005 as a follow-up to the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). It launched the People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition initiative in 2007 to rouse public opinion and help create a global grassroots network of people on the issue.

The SGI actively participates in networks including the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN (CoNGO) and NGO committees on specific themes such as peace and disarmament, human rights education and gender equality in New York, Geneva and Vienna. SGI President Daisaku Ikeda has been issuing his peace proposal annually since 1983 to bring the voices and perspectives of civil society into the work of the UN, suggesting broad themes for the SGI's activities as an NGO.

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E-mail: contact@peacesgi.org