



Soka Gakkai
International
Action for Peace

Peace *Activities*

Annual Report 2023

About Us

We are a globally connected *community* that inspires *hope* to create *peace*

The Soka Gakkai is a global, community-based Buddhist organization with a membership of over 12 million people around the world that promotes peace, culture and education centered on respect for the dignity of life. The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) as a non-governmental organization has been in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 1983. The SGI Office for UN Affairs operates in New York and Geneva, representing the SGI at the UN.



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Action for Peace

The SGI strives to strengthen connections between individuals, civil society and the UN in order to build a peaceful, just and inclusive world. Our focus areas of work include peace, disarmament, sustainability and climate change, human rights education, gender equality and women's empowerment and humanitarian relief. We believe that when united toward a shared goal, human beings have the power to do extraordinary things.

Soka Gakkai organizations and their members around the world also engage in grassroots activities to promote the culture of peace, based on the understanding that individual happiness and the realization of a peaceful world are inextricably linked. Each local organization develops activities in support of the UN agenda in line with its unique cultural context.

Peace Proposals

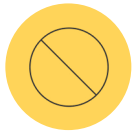
Between 1983 and 2022, annual peace proposals were authored by Daisaku Ikeda (1928–2023), President of SGI. These 40 proposals, as well as statements he issued, continue to guide the SGI's work at the UN. They also inform the activities undertaken by local Soka Gakkai organizations around the world. *Peace proposals* dating from 2000 to 2022 are available for download.

The peace proposals consistently focused on ways of revitalizing and strengthening the role of the UN and the importance of civil society participation, with the belief that the global solidarity of ordinary citizens committed to supporting the UN will help empower and strengthen it. In 2013, *A Forum for Peace*, a compilation of 30 years of proposals addressing the UN, was published and launched at UN Headquarters in New York.

Explore our
Peace Proposals



Focus Areas



Disarmament

Upholding the ultimate respect for human dignity, our disarmament work focuses on nuclear abolition and stopping killer robots, also known as autonomous weapons systems. Both types of weapons are built on the radical negation of others—of their humanity and of their equal right to happiness and life. The SGI is therefore an active member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and the Stop Killer Robots coalition.



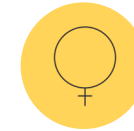
Sustainable Development & Climate Change

Based on the profound awareness of our interconnectedness with our fellow inhabitants of Earth and the natural world, SGI engages in advocacy and community-based awareness-raising activities to ensure a sustainable future. We envisage this future in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are grounded in humanity's right to a healthy environment and the need to protect those most adversely affected by the climate crisis.



Human Rights Education

Respect for all life is a central tenet of Buddhism. We believe transformation of the individual is the foundation for structural and systemic change in society. Human rights education can propel us to overcome discrimination and hatred, recognize the value and dignity of all, and empower people to construct a culture of human rights. Through advocacy and non-formal education, we support the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005–ongoing) and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011).



Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment

Respect and equality, including gender equality, are central to the Buddhist teachings we embrace. SGI has been committed to women's empowerment and leadership, which we see as a self-motivated process to bring forth our full human potential. With its grassroots presence around the world, SGI has built an extensive network of women who are leading its movement to promote the culture of peace. We strive to contribute to the UN by highlighting the vast role and capacity of women to address and overcome our global challenges.



Peace

Building peace involves us all. As Buddhists who treasure life, peace is the heart of SGI's mission. We promote the culture of peace as a set of values, attitudes and ways of life that reject violence and are centered on dialogue. We hope to see the culture of peace deeply rooted in our communities and societies, and we view it as a framework that enables us to approach the various issues at the UN reflected in our focus areas as interconnected and interrelated.



Humanitarian Relief

SGI's engagement in humanitarian relief activities is driven by our Buddhist belief in the dignity of life. Taking the sufferings of others as one's own is the philosophical wellspring for SGI's activities as we aim to contribute to efforts to increase people's resilience, and to provide emergency relief in devastating situations.



Alexander Bitar

A Legacy of Peace: The Life and Work of Daisaku Ikeda



Daisaku Ikeda, Buddhist philosopher, peacebuilder, educator, author and poet, passed away in Tokyo on 15 November, 2023, at the age of 95.

He dedicated his life to promoting peace through dialogue and spearheaded the development of the Soka Gakkai as a community-based Buddhist organization of over 12 million members worldwide.

Ikeda was born on 2 January 1928 in Tokyo, Japan, to a family engaged in seaweed farming. When he was 13, Japan entered World War II, and his eldest brother was killed in the Imphal Campaign in Myanmar. Feeling keenly the cruelty, futility and waste of war, he determined to devote his life to building peace.

Shortly after the war, Ikeda encountered educator and pacifist Josei Toda (1900–58), who had been imprisoned by the militarist authorities during the war and was the leader of the Soka Gakkai Buddhist group. Ikeda embraced Nichiren Buddhism with its goal of creating a society based on respect for the dignity of life, and took Toda as his mentor.

In May 1960, Ikeda became the third president of the Soka Gakkai at the age of 32, a position he held until 1979. He oversaw the broadening of the organization's mission to include the promotion of peace, culture and education. In 1975, the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) was founded as a global association linking Soka Gakkai organizations around the world, and he became its president. In 1983, the SGI was accredited as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Ikeda had been present when, in 1957, Josei Toda made a declaration calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. This declaration inspired him to lifelong advocacy toward nuclear abolition.

He initiated signature campaigns calling for nuclear abolition, started projects recording testimonies of survivors of war including hibakusha, and launched a People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition in 2007, as part of a broad campaign to create a convention that would outlaw nuclear weapons. Under his leadership, members of Soka Gakkai throughout the world became engaged in grassroots awareness-raising efforts promoting peace and nuclear abolition, among other issues. These efforts contributed to the adoption of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2017.

Starting in the 1970s, Ikeda met with key individuals in a wide array of fields to promote peace through dialogue and mutual understanding. He also promoted Sino-Japanese relations, believing that constructive engagement with China was fundamental to the stability of Asia and the world.

Ikeda also conducted dialogues with prominent global figures, including peace activists Linus Pauling and Joseph Rotblat, former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, environmental activist

Wangari Maathai and successive UN Secretaries-General, in order to identify ways of tackling the complex problems facing humanity. More than 70 of these dialogues have been published in book form.

A consistent believer in the central role of the United Nations as a forum for peace, from 1983 to 2022, Ikeda authored 40 annual *peace proposals* providing a Buddhist perspective and concrete suggestions to move forward discourse on key global challenges, including disarmament and the abolition of nuclear weapons, sustainability and the promotion of human rights. In the last year of his life, Ikeda issued several *statements* calling for undertakings of No First Use of nuclear weapons.

Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, former UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative, commented: "I know of no one who has highlighted the role and responsibility of the United Nations so consistently, relentlessly and substantively for such a long period of time as President Ikeda. For the last 40 years, his annual peace proposals have contained brilliant ideas and suggestions for the good of humanity."



Visiting United Nations Headquarters, New York, October 1960



Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai meets with Ikeda and his wife Kaneko, Beijing, December 1974



Nobel Peace Prize laureate Sir Joseph Rotblat and Ikeda, Osaka, October 1989



Welcoming Nelson Mandela to Tokyo shortly after his release from prison, October 1990



Ikeda discusses the role of the UN as a "Parliament of Humanity" in a lecture at the University of Bologna, Italy, June 1994



Ikeda and UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Tokyo, April 1996



Ikeda meets with Dr. Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and founder of Kenya's Green Belt Movement, Tokyo, February 2005



Between 1983 and 2022, Ikeda authored 40 annual peace proposals

Disarmament

MAR & APR | TOKYO & HIROSHIMA, JAPAN

SGI Engages in Youth Summit and Research Conference Ahead of Historic G7 Hiroshima Summit

Ahead of the G7 Hiroshima Summit, SGI representatives participated in the *Hiroshima G7 Youth Summit* held at Hiroshima University from 25–27 April 2023, which was organized by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). SGI, along with other civil society organizations, cosponsored the summit, attended by 50 youth representatives from 19 countries.

During the summit, participants visited the Peace Memorial Museum and Park near the hypocenter of the first atomic bomb, which was detonated on 6 August 1945. Upon their arrival, they had the opportunity to listen to the story of A-bomb survivor *Keiko Ogura*.

On the last day of the summit, the participants adopted and delivered their *youth statement*, which stated their resolve to achieve a more just, peaceful world as leaders of today and included 11 concrete requests to the G7 leaders.

On the same day, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda issued his *Statement on the G7 Hiroshima Summit, the Ukraine Crisis and No First Use of Nuclear Weapons*. Referring to his encounter with Dr. Bernard Lown, Ikeda stated that commitment to No First Use (NFU) is a “prescription for hope” that can serve as the axle connecting the twin wheels of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the



The international conference held at Soka University to discuss perspectives on the G7 Hiroshima Summit

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

In addition, the G7 Research Group, Soka University, SGI and the International Academy for Multicultural Cooperation sponsored an *international conference* at Soka University in Tokyo on 29 March. Experts from the educational, academic, civil society and government communities gathered in person and virtually to share their perspectives and offer their best analyses and words of advice on what the G7 Hiroshima Summit should do to control nuclear, climate and global health risks.

At the session on nuclear weapons control, Anna Ikeda of the SGI offered four policy recommendations, including

adopting a NFU policy on nuclear weapons, stating that this would be a critical step toward reducing the role of nuclear weapons in national security and serve as an impetus to advancing nuclear disarmament.

The conference concluded by assembling specific recommendations, which became the basis for priority recommendations that the sponsors sent to the G7 planners.

Read
[No First Use
statements](#)



JUL | NEW MEXICO, USA

Interfaith Remembrance Event in New Mexico Held to Commemorate Trinity Nuclear Test

Hundreds gathered at the Santa Maria de la Paz Social Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on 16 July 2023 for [“A World Without Nuclear Weapons: From Reflection to Action.”](#) an interfaith remembrance of the Trinity nuclear test. The remembrance event drew a large crowd, with activists, students, scholars and US congressional representatives among them. It was organized by a coalition of faith-based groups, leaders and institutions: the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, Nuclear Watch New Mexico, Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium, the United Church of Santa Fe and SGI-USA. Most Reverend John C. Wester, Catholic Archbishop of Santa Fe, opened the event by stressing that “the non-negotiable step to world peace is multilateral verifiable nuclear

disarmament, so that is the focus of our prayer today.”

The event organizers issued a call for action; Tina Cordova, co-founder of the Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium, joined SGI-USA Public Affairs Director Danny Hall in outlining steps that attendees could take toward a nuclear-free future. These included asking U.S. Congressional representatives to cosponsor House Resolution 77, titled “Embracing the goals and provisions of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons,” as well as joining forces with the national grassroots coalition [Back from the Brink](#).

Two SGI-USA youths read a message sent by Charles Oppenheimer, grandson of the late J. Robert Oppenheimer, the

American theoretical physicist who directed the Manhattan Project that created the first nuclear weapons. Addressing his grandfather’s life and complicated legacy, he urged those gathered to hear the final message that his grandfather had left for the scientists at Los Alamos: “The peoples of this world must unite or they will perish. This war, which has ravaged so much of the earth, has written these words. The atomic bomb has spelled them out for all men to understand.”



George Nakamura

Tina Cordova speaks at “A World Without Nuclear Weapons: From Reflection to Action”

AUG | VIENNA, AUSTRIA

SGI Participates in Preparatory Committee for 2026 NPT Review Conference

The [Preparatory Committee](#) for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) held its first session from 31 July to 11 August 2023 at the Vienna International Centre in Vienna, Austria. As part of civil society, SGI participated and co-organized three side events on different themes together with like-minded institutions and organizations.

On 1 August, SGI co-organized the side event “The Catastrophic Consequences of Nuclear Tests in Kazakhstan: A First-Person

History” with the Center for International Security and Policy (CISP) and the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan in Vienna. The event featured a screening of a trailer for a documentary film produced by CISP with the support of SGI. Additionally, attendees heard a [personal testimony](#) from Dmitriy Vesselov, a third-generation victim of nuclear tests in Semey City, formerly known as Semipalatinsk, in Kazakhstan, as well as a discussion on victim assistance, environmental remediation and international cooperation as articulated in Articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of

Nuclear Weapons. Alibek Bakayev, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations in Vienna, also spoke.

On 3 August, SGI held a second side event, titled “No First Use as a Path to Nuclear Disarmament,” with the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (NAPF) and Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), moderated by Chie Sunada, SGI Director of Disarmament and Human Rights. The three panelists discussed nuclear risk reduction through policies of No First Use (NFU) and examined how to advance nuclear disarmament by furthering NFU initiatives.

Lastly, on 7 August, SGI organized the third side event, “In Discussion with Global Youth: Inheriting the

Experiences of Hibakusha,” with other youth-focused organizations, virtually connecting with many young people from around the world. Participants viewed a video of the testimony of A-bomb survivor Keiko Ogura, who shared her experience as a hibakusha with world leaders at the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May 2023. Ogura, who was just eight years old at the time of the attack, was near her home in Ushitamachi, 2.4 kilometers from the Hiroshima hypocenter. Five youth representatives from different regions and backgrounds shared their respective initiatives toward disarmament and the abolition of nuclear weapons, including Mitsunobu Takahashi of SGI, who introduced the peace activities of the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee in Nagasaki.



A-bomb survivor Keiko Ogura shares her testimony at an event organized by the Soka Gakkai Hiroshima Women's Peace Committee

Watch her
testimony



AUG | ASTANA, KAZAKHSTAN

Central Asian States Meet to Discuss Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear-Weapon Free Zone

On 29 August 2023, SGI joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Center for International Security and Policy (CISP) and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) to co-organize a regional conference titled “The Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons and the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia,” held in Astana, Kazakhstan. Representatives from the five Member States of the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Semipalatinsk Treaty), namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, attended.

Kairat Umarov, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, delivered a welcome address. Hirotsugu Terasaki, SGI Director General for Peace and Global Issues, gave a speech expressing his hope for meaningful discussions on the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), in order to move the world closer to nuclear disarmament.

Established in 2009, the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (CANWFZ), is the first nuclear-weapon-free zone situated entirely in the Northern Hemisphere. Participants discussed the



Hirotsugu Terasaki, SGI Director General for Peace and Global Issues, speaks at the conference

humanitarian and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons and the legacy of nuclear testing in the region, as well as the complementarity between the CANWFZ Treaty and other international legal instruments, such as the TPNW. Discussions at the conference also touched on the TPNW's role in addressing victim assistance and environmental remediation. Anna Ikeda of SGI presented on the role of peace and disarmament education in advancing disarmament and universalizing the norms of the TPNW.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan issued a chair's summary as host of the Conference.

NOV-DEC | UN HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK, USA

At Second Meeting, States Parties to TPNW Commit to Strengthen Norms Against Nuclear Weapons, Address Past Harms

A total of 94 countries participated in the Second Meeting of States Parties (MSP) to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which took place from 27 November to 1 December 2023 at UN Headquarters in New York, presided over by Dr. Juan Ramón de la Fuente of Mexico. There was a strong presence of UN agencies, international organizations and global civil society, including a delegation from the SGI.

As with the previous meetings, such as the first MSP and the negotiating conferences of the TPNW, voices of those from affected communities were highlighted throughout the week. One such event was the film premiere and discussion of the documentary *I Want To Live On: The Untold Stories of the Polygon* held on 28 November and co-organized

by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Center for International Security and Policy (CISP), the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and the SGI. The documentary was produced by CISP with the support of SGI. The film sheds light on the Semipalatinsk Test Site, also known as “the Polygon,” which served as the Soviet Union’s primary nuclear test site until 1991. After the screening, Aigerim Yelgeldy, who is the third generation in her family to be impacted by nuclear tests at the Polygon, shared her testimony.

The SGI also supported a showing of some photographs from the exhibition “Portraits of the Hibakusha—80 Years Remembered” at the UN, featuring lenticular holographic portraits of survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, created by UK-based 80,000 Voices and photographer Patrick Boyd, and sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN.

Demonstrating the TPNW States Parties’ aspiration for inclusivity, members of civil society were able to participate in the ongoing discussions at the plenary sessions by delivering statements and



Aigerim Yelgeldy (second from left) shares her testimony at the film premiere of the documentary “I Want To Live On: The Untold Stories of the Polygon”

Watch the documentary



taking part in panels during thematic discussions. Many of the participants were youth, who led and participated in a number of events and held discussions with government representatives. The SGI delegation also included four youth members, who participated in the Youth MSP organized by Youth for TPNW on 28 November. SGI also endorsed the joint youth statement delivered on 29 November, with some of its youth delegates contributing to the drafting process.

In addition, SGI helped coordinate the joint interfaith statement endorsed by 115 organizations from a wide range of faith traditions, and Anna Ikeda of SGI delivered the statement

during the general exchange of views. Some representatives of SGI also participated in the interfaith vigil held on the morning of 29 November, where participants gathered to offer prayers for the success of the MSP and the goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

Prior to the MSP, SGI submitted a working paper titled “The Role of Peace and Disarmament Education in Advancing the Vienna Action Plan.” Based on this paper, Chie Sunada of SGI delivered a statement during the segment on Article 12, highlighting the role of education in advancing the universalization of the treaty.



Anna Ikeda of SGI delivers the joint interfaith statement

FEB | SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA

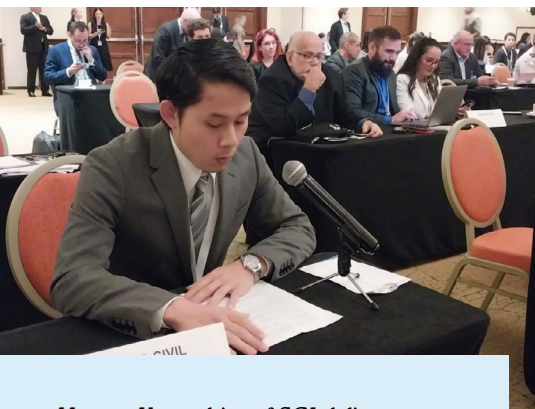
SGI Participates in Seminal Conferences on Autonomous Weapons Systems in Costa Rica

From 20–22 February 2023, the Digital Dehumanisation Conference was convened by Stop Killer Robots (SKR) in San José, Costa Rica. It was attended by 68 campaigners from 29 countries. The conference addressed the issue of autonomous weapons under the theme of digital dehumanisation, defined by SKR as the process whereby humans are reduced to data, which is then used to make decisions or take actions that affect our lives. Hayato Yamashita of SGI, who attended the conference, shared SGI's advocacy and awareness-raising efforts, including supporting the production of the documentary film *Immoral Code*, and emphasized the importance of education for the younger generations.

Following the Digital Dehumanisation Conference, the Latin American and the Caribbean Conference

on the Social and Humanitarian Impact of Autonomous Weapons was convened on 23–24 February by the government of Costa Rica and its partners. Over 30 states from Latin America and the Caribbean attended this conference, with more than 10 observer states from other regions. UN agencies, international organizations and civil society representatives also participated in the conference. Stressing the need to morally and ethically examine the issue of autonomy in weapons systems, Yamashita delivered a statement on behalf of SGI, stating, "We have an opportunity now to decide how we want to use technology, and we can do so by rejecting the notion that it is permissible to leave the decisions of life and death to machines."

At the end of the conference, 33 states from Latin America and the Caribbean adopted a historic *Communiqué* calling for the urgent negotiation of an internationally legally binding instrument on autonomous weapons. This was the first regional statement delivered outside of UN fora.



Hayato Yamashita of SGI delivers a statement in San José, Costa Rica



Digital Dehumanisation Conference participants in San José, Costa Rica

SEP | PORT OF SPAIN, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The Caribbean Community Holds Regional Conference Exploring Human Impacts of Autonomous Weapons Systems

Building on the momentum of the Latin American and the Caribbean regional conference held in February 2023 in San José, Costa Rica, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) decided to host its own regional conference to explore the human impacts of autonomous weapons systems (AWS).

The SGI worked together with the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) and the Stop Killer Robots (SKR)

coalition, with the support of the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, to organize the two-day regional conference, "*CARICOM Conference 2023: The Human Impacts of Autonomous Weapons*," held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, from 5–6 September. Attendees included government officials from CARICOM member states, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), UN agencies, academics, technical experts and civil society.



CARICOM Conference 2023 participants in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

raised by “new technological applications... including those related to artificial intelligence and autonomy in weapons systems.” It also “stresses the urgent need for the international community to address the challenges and concerns raised by autonomous weapons systems” and requests the Secretary-General to seek the views of countries and other stakeholders on ways to address the challenges and concerns raised by autonomous weapons systems and reflect those views in a report to the General Assembly by September 2024.



The conference adopts the CARICOM Declaration on Autonomous Weapons Systems

During the high level opening remarks, Hayley Ramsay-Jones of SGI highlighted the responsibility that decision makers have to act now to save many lives. While speaking on a panel regarding intersectional perspectives, Ramsay-Jones highlighted the dynamics between power, violence and weapons, and explored the different ways weapons are used to yield and maintain power over people and groups, noting the broader impacts this has on marginalized communities. On behalf of SGI, Hayato Yamashita also delivered a statement to the conference that called attention to the concerns of interfaith communities.

On 6 September, the conference concluded by adopting the CARICOM Declaration on Autonomous Weapons Systems (AWS).

This historic declaration outlined the commitment of states to “collaborate on endeavors aimed at negotiating an international legally binding instrument that prohibits unpredictable or uncontrollable AWS capable of using force without meaningful human control, and prohibits those designed or employed to apply force against persons, while implementing regulations for other forms of AWS.”

These regional conferences contributed to strengthening the much needed momentum to advance multilateral discussions. Following the conferences, on 22 December, 152 countries voted in favor of the first-ever UN General Assembly resolution on the dangers of lethal autonomous weapons systems. It acknowledges the “serious challenges and concerns”

Voting Started		12/22/2023	4:01:10 PM			
Item 99 - A/78/409 DR XXXIII as a whole						
Lethal autonomous weapons systems						
+ ALBANIA + ALGERIA + ANDORRA + ANGOLA + ANTIGUA-B... + ARGENTINA + ARMENIA + AUSTRALIA + AUSTRIA + AZERBAIJAN + BAHAMAS + BAHRAIN + BANGLADESH + BARBADOS + BELARUS + BELGIUM + BELIZE + BENIN + BHUTAN + BOLIVIA + BOSNIA-HER... + BOTSWANA + BRAZIL + BRUNEI DAR... + BULGARIA + BURKINA FASO + BURUNDI + CABO VERDE + CAMBODIA	+ CAMEROON + CANADA + CENTRAL AF... + CHAD + CHILE + CHINA + COLOMBIA + COMOROS + CONGO + COSTA RICA + COTE D'IVOIRE + CROATIA + CUBA + CYPRUS + CZECHIA + DEM PR OF K... + DEN REP OF ... + DENMARK + DIBOUTI + DOMINICA + DOMINICAN ... + ECUADOR + EGYPT + EL SALVADOR + EQUATORIAL... + ERTREYA + ESTONIA + ETHIOPIA + FIJI	+ FINLAND + FRANCE + GABON + GAMBIA + GEORGIA + GERMANY + GHANA + GREECE + GRENADA + GUATEMALA + GUINEA + GUINEA-BISS... + GUYANA + HAITI + HONDURAS + HUNGARY + ICELAND + INDIA + INDONESIA + IRAN (ISLAM... + IRAQ + IRELAND + ISRAEL + ITALY + JAMAICA + JAPAN + JORDAN + KAZAKHSTAN + KENYA + KIRIBATI	+ KUWAIT + KYRGYZSTAN + LAO PDR + LATVIA + LEBANON + LESOTHO + LIBERIA + LIBYA + LIECHTENSTEIN + LITHUANIA + LUXEMBOURG + MADAGASCAR + MALAWI + MALAYSIA + MALDIVES + MALI + MALTA + MARSHALL IS... + MAURITANIA + MAURITIUS + MEXICO + MICRONESIA... + MONACO + MONGOLIA + MONTENEGRO + MOROCCO + MYANMAR + NAMIBIA + NAURU	+ NEPAL + NETHERLAN... + NEW ZEALAND + NICARAGUA + NIGER + NIGERIA + NORTH MAC... + NORWAY + OMAN + PAKISTAN + PALAU + PANAMA + PAPAUA NEW ... + PARAGUAY + PERU + PHILIPPINES + POLAND + PORTUGAL + QATAR + REP OF KOREA + REP OF MOL... + ROMANIA + RUSSIAN FED... + SAO TOME-P...	+ SAUDI ARABIA + SENEGAL + SERBIA + SEYCHELLES + SIERRA LEONE + SINGAPORE + SLOVAKIA + SLOVENIA + SOLOMON IS... + SOMALIA + SOUTH AFRICA + SOUTH SUDAN + SPAIN + SRI LANKA + SUDAN + SURINAME + SWEDEN + SWITZERLAND + SYRIAN ARA... + TAJIKISTAN + THAILAND + TIMOR-LESTE + TOGO + TONGA + TRINIDAD-TO... + TUNISIA + TURKMENIST... + TUVALU + TURKIYE + UGANDA	+ UKRAINE + UNITED ARA... + UNITED KING... + UNITED REP T... + UNITED REP T... + UNITED REP T... + URUGUAY + UZBEKISTAN + VANUATU + VENEZUELA + VIET NAM + YEMEN + ZAMBIA + ZIMBABWE
+ IN FAVOUR: 152		- AGAINST: 4	+ ABSTENTION: 11			

On 22 December 2023, 152 countries voted in favor of the first-ever UN General Assembly resolution on the dangers of lethal autonomous weapons systems

Sustainability & Climate Change



JUN & NOV-DEC | BONN, GERMANY & DUBAI, UAE

Promoting Youth Participation and a Human Rights Perspective in Climate Change Negotiations

SGI representatives participated in the fifty-eighth meeting of the subsidiary bodies (SB58) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Bonn, Germany, from 5–15 June 2023. Alexandra Goossens-Ishii followed the Global Stocktake (GST) process and stressed its significance. SGI also cosponsored initiatives aimed at a fossil fuel phase-out, strengthened human rights integration and enhanced protection for environmental defenders.

SGI representative Chiara De Paoli participated in the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)

dialogue, where she highlighted youth concerns and showcased the climate action projects supported by the Italian Buddhist Institute Soka Gakkai. Lucy Plummer, also of SGI, focused on young people’s involvement in the UN climate processes, emphasizing their crucial role in advocating for justice and transformative change.

SGI also participated in the twenty-eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP28) of the UNFCCC, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 30 November to 13 December. At the event, SGI promoted human rights-based



Alexandra Goossens-Ishii (second from right) contributes to interfaith efforts promoting climate justice during a press conference at SB58

approaches and the crucial role of nature, highlighted positive case studies of individual action at the grassroots level and advocated for faith actors' perspectives to be included in policymaking decisions.

Contributions from SGI included involvement in planning the Interfaith Talanoa Dialogue that engaged over 150 participants in climate justice discussions on the first day of COP28. Later, Plummer contributed to the *Youth Stocktake of UNFCCC Processes*, advocating for sustainable strategies, funding and intergenerational partnerships. SGI

also collaborated with the Italian Buddhist Institute Soka Gakkai in promoting the Youth4Climate Call for Solutions.

Nobuyuki Asai of SGI addressed mitigation and adaptation, sharing Japan's disaster risk reduction insights. SGI also endorsed the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, targeting a root cause of the climate crisis, and co-organized a side event on nature and climate in the Faiths for Biodiversity coalition that emphasized the role of faith groups.

FEB | NEW DELHI, INDIA

Promoting Sustainable Human Behavior in India

On 23 February 2023, Bharat Soka Gakkai (BSG) Chairperson Vishesh Gupta participated in a roundtable titled "Circular Economy and Green Supply Chains," which was part of the World Sustainable Development Summit 2023. Held from 22–24 February at the India Habitat Center in New Delhi, the summit was organized by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), a New Delhi-based research institute, and it was linked to India's G20 Presidency later in the year.

Vishesh Gupta stressed the importance of sustainable human behavior and empowerment for individuals to live sustainably. To this end, he recommended focusing on grassroots efforts, sustainability education and promoting the power of even a single individual to effect change.

The roundtable was chaired by Dr. Atul Narayan Vaidya, Director of the CSIR-National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-NEERI), and other participants included Perses Bilimoria, Founder and CEO of Earth Soul India, and environmentalist Dr. Ashok Khosla. Recommendations from the roundtable were presented in a proposal to the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests.

On 22 April, Earth Day, BSG participated in an event organized by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi



A video created as part of BSG's "Say NO to Plastic" campaign

for their #100DaystoBeatPlastic campaign. At the event, BSG introduced its "Say No to Plastic" campaign, which promotes not using plastic bags, bottles and other plastic products.

On 26 April, BSG organized its second Sustainability Conclave titled "Goals to Action: Through Sustainable Human Behaviour" at the Chinmaya Mission Auditorium in New Delhi. Nearly 4,000 people attended the hybrid event that featured the "Seeds of Hope and Action: Making the SDGs a Reality" (SOHA) exhibition, a joint initiative of the SGI and the Earth Charter International. TERI Director General Dr. Vibha Dhawan delivered the keynote address.

BSG continues to promote many related initiatives through its "BSG for SDGs" campaign.



Lucy Plummer of SGI, a member of YOUNGO, (center) at the launch of the first-ever Youth Stocktake of UNFCCC Processes

Read the *Youth Stocktake Report*

JUN | MANAUS, BRAZIL

Earth Charter International and Soka Amazon Institute Sign Partnership



Commemorative tree planting

© Seikyo Shimbun

In commemoration of World Environment Day on 5 June 2023, Mirian Vilela, Executive Director of the *Earth Charter International (ECI)*, visited the *Soka Amazon Institute* near Manaus, Brazil, to sign a partnership agreement linking the two institutions. The Institute became the first Amazonian organization affiliated with ECI. Consul-General of Japan in Manaus Masahiro Ogino, Soka Gakkai President Minoru Harada and other guests attended. Based on the agreement, the two organizations will continue and further develop their collaboration in education and awareness-raising activities for sustainable living.

At the signing ceremony, Vilela reflected on the long history of ECI and SGI's joint efforts and emphasized that human beings can solve many global problems if they are united. Luciano Nascimento, Director of the Soka Amazon Institute, evaluated the *Earth Charter* highly as a document that gives hope regarding the urgent changes that are necessary for the good of future generations, and he expressed his expectations toward the future.

The ceremony concluded with the planting of a Golden Chain Tree, a native tree whose leaves and bark are traditionally used to lower fever in those affected by malaria, in celebration of World Environment Day and the twenty-third anniversary of the Earth Charter.

Later, on 29 June, ECI, SGI and other organizations held two webinars titled "Earth Charter+23 – Emerging efforts towards planetary well-being and ecological civilizations," to mark the Earth Charter's twenty-third anniversary. Noting that 2023 marks the halfway point to 2030, the target year for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the speakers analyzed the relationship between the Earth Charter and the SDGs and explored further efforts toward planetary well-being and ecological civilization.

SEP | UN HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK, USA

Highlighting Transformative Action by Faith Groups at SDG Summit

The *2023 SDG Summit* took place from 18–19 September 2023 at UN Headquarters in New York. Convened by the President of the General Assembly, the Summit marked the halfway point to the deadline set for achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The General Assembly adopted a *political declaration* that reaffirmed Member States' continued shared commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda.

SGI co-organized a side event convened by the Trilateral Partnership of Regional Faith-based Networks for the SDGs from Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean on 18 September. Titled "Inspiring Faith, Hope and Transformative Action to Accelerate Progress Towards the SDGs," this

five-hour hybrid event brought together over 150 participants from faith-based organizations, governments, the UN and academia.

As a member and former convener of the Asia Pacific Faith-Based Coalition for Sustainable Development (APFC), Hiro Sakurai of SGI moderated the session "Faith-Based Transformative Actions for SDGs 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)." Sakurai also spoke as a panelist to represent SGI and share its efforts for advancing peace and sustainable development, highlighting the organization's work for nuclear disarmament.

After the event, a joint statement was issued by the three regional networks and disseminated widely.




Ariгато International


The side event "Inspiring Faith, Hope and Transformative Action to Accelerate Progress Towards the SDGs" co-organized by SGI

DISCUSSION PAPER
October 2023

ADOPTING A HUMAN RIGHTS BASED APPROACH TO BIODIVERSITY & CLIMATE ACTION



Read the [discussion paper](#)



SwedBio
A programme at Stockholm Resilience Centre

SGI
Soka Gakkai International
Action for Peace

Together with *SwedBio*, a program for biodiversity at the Stockholm Resilience Center, SGI released a [discussion paper](#) highlighting the essential role of a human rights-based approach in addressing biodiversity and climate challenges. This was launched during a side event co-organized by SGI, SwedBio and members of the informal Working Group on Biodiversity and Human Rights.

Goossens-Ishii also spoke at a side event on the role of faith-based organizations in implementing the KM-GBF, titled “Earth Restored: Joining Hands with Faith-based Organizations to Implement the Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework,” co-organized and supported by

SGI, the Faiths for Biodiversity Coalition, UNEP Faith for Earth, Expertise France and the Post 2020 Biodiversity Implementation-EU Support project.

The side event also introduced a [four-page briefing paper](#) on the same topic, which was coauthored by Gopal D. Patel, Co-chair on the Advisory Board of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and co-convenor of the Faiths for Biodiversity coalition; Lauren Van Ham, Climate Action Coordinator for United Religions Initiative; and Alexandra Goossens-Ishii of SGI and co-convenor of the Faiths for Biodiversity coalition.

EARTH RESTORED:
JOINING HANDS WITH FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS (FBOs) TO IMPLEMENT THE KMGBF



Azmaira Alibha
Faith for Earth - UNEP

Gopal D. Patel
Faiths for Biodiversity Coalition
UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

Lauren Van Ham
United Religions Initiative

Alexandra M. Goossens-Ishii
Soka Gakkai International
Faiths for Biodiversity coalition

Nicolas Pande
Environmental Policy Lead
Anglican Communion

Peter Aburi
UNEP Representative
Bahai International Community

Tess Gitau
Catholic Youth Network for
Environmental Sustainability in Africa
(CYNESA)

Lucy Mulenkei
International Indigenous Forum
on Biodiversity

Cristina Eghenter
WWF International

UN Programme
ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION
FAITHS FOR BIODIVERSITY COALITION

Read the [Earth Restored briefing paper](#)



OCT | NAIROBI, KENYA

SGI Contributes to UN Discussions on Climate and Biodiversity Action

SGI was represented by Alexandra Goossens-Ishii at the consultations on nature-based solutions led by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) from 9–13 October 2023 and the 25th Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-25) of the Convention on Biological Diversity from 15–19 October in Nairobi, Kenya. These meetings were held 10 months after the historic adoption of the

Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF).

SBSTTA-25 addressed implementation of the KM-GBF and evidence for biodiversity-related decisions, including those on invasive species, the sustainable use of wildlife, biodiversity and climate change. Discussions will continue in preparation for the biodiversity COP16 to be held in Colombia in October 2024.

MAR | WINDSOR, CANADA

“Transforming Lives: The Power of Human Rights Education” Exhibition Shown in Canada

From 15–18 March 2023, the exhibition “*Transforming Lives: The Power of Human Rights Education*” was held at Mackenzie Hall Cultural Centre in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. SGI created the exhibition together with HRE 2020 and the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning, and the Platform for Human Rights Education and Training with thanks to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Launched in 2017 to mark the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, the 25-panel exhibition illustrates the vital role of *human rights education* in promoting dignity, equality and peace, and in preventing human rights violations and abuses. It presents stories of how human rights education has empowered and transformed the lives of individuals and communities in Australia, Burkina Faso, Peru, Portugal and Turkey. It also examines what ordinary citizens and civil society organizations can do to nurture a culture of human rights.

Local SGI Canada women’s group leader Iole Iadipaolo worked with several community groups to support the exhibition showing. Cosponsors were the City of Windsor; the New Canadians’ Centre of Excellence Inc.; Legal Assistance of Windsor, a service jointly run by the Faculty of Law at the University

of Windsor and Legal Aid Ontario; Anti-Racism Organizational Change of the Office of the Vice-President, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Windsor; and the Interfaith Group of Windsor and Essex County.

At the exhibition’s closing event, attendees heard a message from City of Windsor Mayor Drew Dilkens and remarks from community leaders. SGI Canada General Director Glenn Turner also shared a message highlighting the importance of cultivating a spirit of empathy throughout society in order to combat violence and hatred.

“*Transforming Lives: The Power of Human Rights Education*” is currently available in English, French, Japanese and Korean.



Susumu Uchida

View the
exhibition



Human Rights Education

HUMAN RIGHTS 75

SEP-OCT | UN OFFICE AT GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

At HRC54, States and Stakeholders Outline Priorities for Fifth Phase of World Programme for Human Rights Education

From 11 September to 13 October 2023, SGI participated at the fifty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council (HRC54) at the United Nations Office at Geneva, together with representatives from governments, civil society and international organizations. Several human rights issues were addressed during the session, including education in conflict situations, children and young people, bullying, gender equality and climate change.

During the first week, High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk gave a full update on the status of human rights in many countries. He stressed the importance of building trust, restoring hope and coming together to confront the challenges that humanity is facing, including through the work of the Human Rights Council.

Related to human rights education (HRE), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) presented

a report on civil society and states' views on focus areas and target sectors of the fifth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, an international framework that aims to advance the implementation of HRE at the national level.

SGI closely followed the drafting of a resolution for this fifth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education and made a written submission that stressed the importance of the fifth phase's continued focus on youth, with a specific focus on young people from marginalized communities. During the last week of HRC54, States adopted the resolution for the fifth phase, which spans from 2025 until 2029. It was decided to focus on young people, expanding the scope to include children, with special emphasis on human rights and digital technologies; gender equality; and environment and climate change.

SGI also made a joint proposal together with other colleagues on the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning. On behalf of this group, Elisa Gazzotti of SGI delivered an oral statement that advocated for human rights education and young people, stressing urgent themes such as the environment and gender equality.



Elisa Gazzotti of SGI delivering an oral statement at HRC54



Screening of the documentary film, followed by a conversation with the featured young human rights educators

Watch *Changemakers*



DEC | UN OFFICE AT GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

"Changemakers" Launch Creates Hope in Dark Times

On 11 December 2023, as part of the commemorations for the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), SGI, Amnesty International (AI) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) co-organized a launch event for the documentary film and multimedia educational tool "Changemakers: Stories of Young Human Rights Educators" as a side event to Human Rights 75 (HR75) at the United Nations Office at Geneva, Switzerland. Produced in partnership with AI and the OHCHR,

this educational tool builds on the previous collaboration with OHCHR that produced the film "A Path to Dignity" and it is now available on the Human Rights Education: Open Web Resource in English, French, Spanish and Arabic.

Changemakers features the stories of seven young human rights educators: Irfaan Mangera from South Africa, about racism and racial discrimination; Soufiane Hennani from Morocco, about gender equality and sexual orientation; Aizat Ruslanova from

DEC | TOKYO, JAPAN

Forum Explores Role of Youth in Upholding and Enacting UN Declaration of Human Rights

On 16 December 2023, *Amnesty International Japan* (AI Japan) and the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee hosted their 6th Annual Youth Forum, which featured speeches, dialogues and panel discussions presented to approximately 300 in-person and online participants. The exhibition “The Illustrated Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” created by AI Japan, was also displayed at the venue.

In her keynote speech, Mikiko Otani, human rights lawyer and former Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, introduced the words of Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, who stressed the need “to rekindle the spirit, impulse and vitality that led to the Universal Declaration 75 years ago.” Otani also expressed her conviction that it is none other than children and youth who hold the key to making these words a reality.

The forum also hosted a commemorative dialogue between Kiyoshi Akasu, Secretary General of the Soka Gakkai Youth Peace Committee, and Shizue Sazawa, Japanese Sign Language Adjunct Instructor at Rikkyo University, during which Sazawa shared her personal experiences as a deaf person and the difficulties posed by her disability. Also, a panel moderated by Kaoru Nemoto, Director of United Nations Information Centre Tokyo, hosted four young human rights activists:

Yuichi Kamiya, Yuriko Oda, Momoko Nojo and Iori Harada, who shared their activities in their respective fields.

Kamiya is Secretary-General of the Japan Alliance for LGBTQI+ Legislation, a group of more than 100 LGBTQI+ organizations in Japan. He has taught at many universities and been an advisor to various companies, municipalities and labor unions. Oda was diagnosed with distal myopathy in 2002 and became a wheelchair user in 2006 after giving birth to her son. Nojo is the Founder of both No Youth No Japan, an organization that aims to promote political participation by young people, and the Fiftys Project, an initiative that advocates for gender equality in the political field. Harada is a committee member of the Children and Families Agency, which was established in April 2023 as a new organization that plays a leading role in the government’s work on children. He shared his experience as a young caregiver who supported his mother when she suffered from depression.

Kyrgyzstan, about women’s rights; Aiki Matsukura from Japan, about sexual exploitation of children; Andrés Allán Sánchez Osorio from Panama, about the rights of children and youth in vulnerable situations; Maselina Iuta from Samoa, about the human rights of people with disabilities; and Dejana Dexi Stošić from Serbia, about gender equality and gender-based violence. These young human rights educators also participated in person at HR75 and related side events in Geneva, where they stressed the importance of human rights education for, with and by youth.

On 12 December, SGI, AI and the OHCHR co-organized an event open to the public where *Changemakers* was screened, followed by a

conversation with the featured young human rights educators. Flore Ghetti of SGI, one of the young members of the Youth Advisory Board for the project, moderated the discussion. Around 50 people attended the event, which was held in English with French and sign language interpretation.

In addition, on 15 December, SGI cosponsored an event organized by the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO). Elisa Gazzotti of SGI was invited to speak about human rights education, human rights and civil society. On this occasion, she also introduced the newly-launched multimedia educational tool.

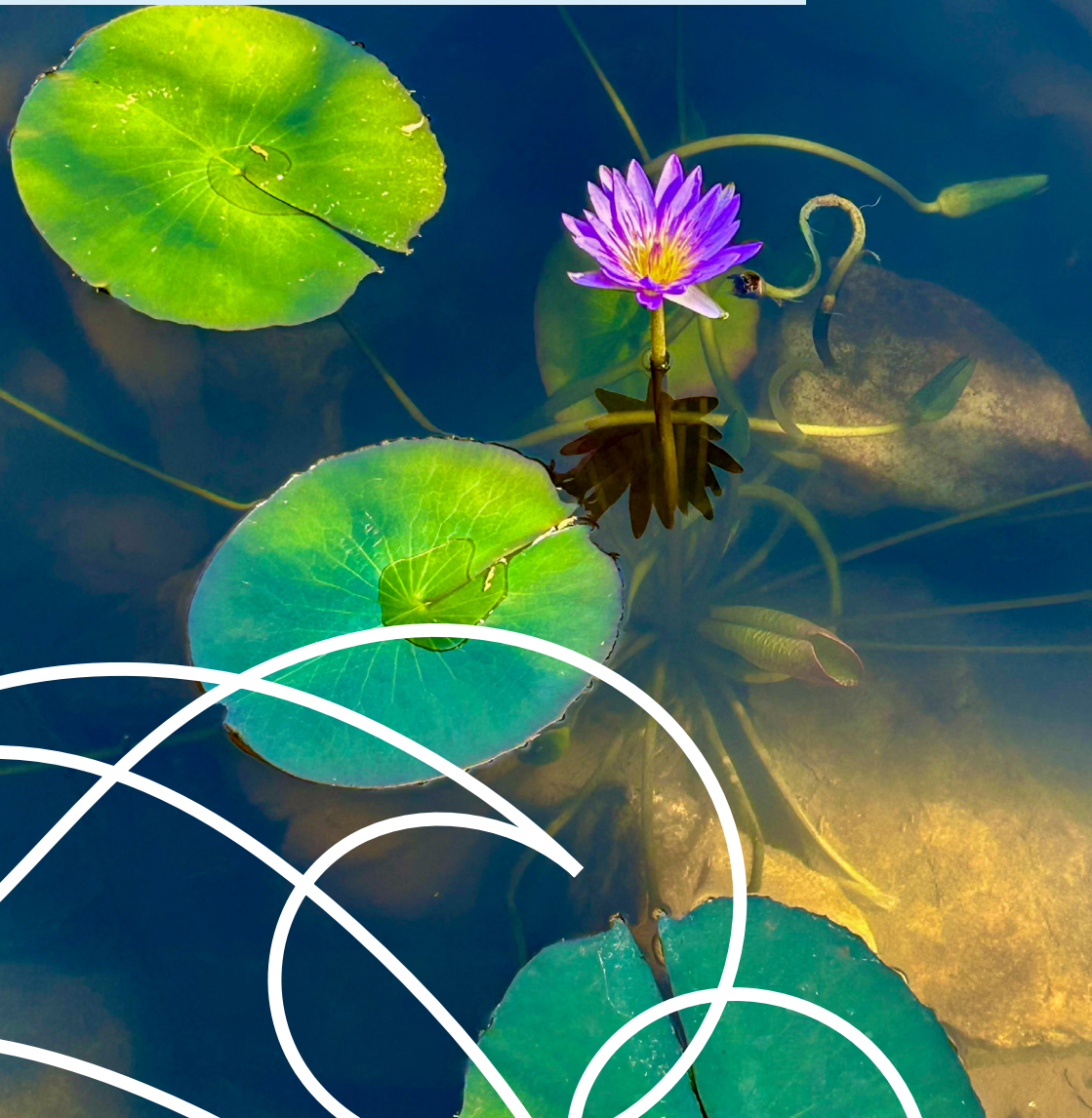


The young educators inspire peers to take action on human rights



Youth forum panel discussion

Peace



JAN | NEW YORK, USA

Symposium on Role of Religion and Faith-Based Organizations in International Affairs: A Discussion on Securing Planetary Well-Being and Sustainability

The *9th Annual Symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-Based Organizations in International Affairs* took place on 24 January 2023 at the Church Center for the United Nations in New York and online. Together with seven faith-based partners and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), SGI organized the event under the theme “Securing People’s Well-Being and Planetary Sustainability,” which addressed the topic of human security.

After a High-Level Opening, Azza Karam, Secretary General of Religions for Peace, moderated a panel titled “Framing Human Security as Shared Security for People and the Planet.” The panel featured Samuel Rizk of the UNDP Crisis Bureau and speakers from other organizations, including the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, Islamic Relief USA, the World University Consortium and Soka University in Japan. Social

anthropologist Anne Mette Fisker-Nielsen remarked that Soka Gakkai proposes the need to cultivate an inner transformation in attitude and cultural outlook simultaneously.

Other program sessions in the symposium included “Seeing and Doing Human Security” and “Key Learnings.” In his concluding words, Ganoune Diop, Director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, proposed that the symposium’s planning committee add an action item to consider creating a task force on a culture of human security. The task force would address all the themes the symposia have covered since 2015. Human security, he said, is a cross-cutting theme that needs critical attention, as we live in an age of insecurity.



World Council of Churches

Symposium speakers and participants

MAR | EDINBURGH, UK

Talk on 40th SGI Peace Proposal Held at Scottish Parliament

On 30 March 2023, an event at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, UK, hosted by Paul McLennan, Member of the Scottish Parliament and Minister for Housing, and coordinated by SGI-UK member Harley Loudon, celebrated the profound impact one person's actions can have in their local community.

The event featured a talk by Robert Harrap, General Director of SGI-UK, which drew on key points from SGI President Daisaku Ikeda's 40th peace proposal, "Transforming Human History: The Light of Peace and Dignity." Harrap also emphasized overarching themes from 40 years of Ikeda's peace proposals, such as compassion, deepening personal and intrapersonal responsibility and the importance of envisioning an active and dynamic peace.

As a backdrop to the event, panels from the "Seeds of Hope: Visions of sustainability, steps toward change" exhibition, a collaboration between Earth Charter International and SGI, were on display to inspire reflection and dialogue on pressing global issues.

Speakers from different faiths and communities spoke about their personal journeys of taking courageous action in the face of adversity. In his opening remarks, McLennan described how he became passionate about the abolition of nuclear weapons at the age of 15 and how this led to working in the local council and later in government. He spoke on the link between local and international injustices and highlighted the importance of being determined to make a difference.

The event was attended by around 100 people, and many shared that, it made them feel empowered and valued. Guests departed with packets of sunflower seeds, symbolizing hope and future possibility.



SGI-UK

Paul McLennan speaks at the peace proposal event



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Youth delegates engage in discussion at the Soka Gakkai Okinawa International Peace Center

AUG | OKINAWA, JAPAN

Youth Summit on Renunciation of War Held in Okinawa

From 19–20 August 2023, the Soka Gakkai Youth Division in Japan held its 32nd Youth Summit on the Renunciation of War in Okinawa. Annually since 1989, the youth summit has been held to share peace activities in respective parts of Japan and to exchange views on peacebuilding among youth delegates across the country.

On the first day, the youth delegates visited a cave in Yomitan Village, known as Chibi Chiri Gama, where the initial attack took place during the Battle of Okinawa in the final days of World War II. Fearing capture by U.S. soldiers, more than 80 local people killed themselves in the cave. Seeing the cave with their own eyes, the youth members formed

a connection to this tragic history and prayed for the innocent civilians who lost their lives during the battle. The youth delegates also visited the Okinawa World Peace Monument at the Soka Gakkai Okinawa Training Center in Onna Village, created from one of the four U.S. Mace B missile launch sites that were in place during the U.S. occupation of Okinawa.

After visiting these two historical sites, the youth delegates participated in the summit held at the Soka Gakkai Okinawa International Peace Center. Representatives from Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Okinawa and the Kansai region introduced their peace activities within their respective

areas. Student Division members reported the results of an awareness survey on the issue of nuclear weapons, which they conducted during the summer of 2023.

On the morning of the second day, the youth delegates laid a wreath at the Cornerstone of Peace memorial during a visit to the Peace

Memorial Park in Itoman City, the last and bloodiest site of the Battle of Okinawa. Lastly, they heard Hiromi Onabe, a staff member at the Himeyuri Peace Museum, share the war testimony of Kikuko Miyagi, who was drafted into the Himeyuri Student Corps at the age of sixteen and worked as a military nurse.

SEP | BERLIN, GERMANY

SGI Representatives Participate in *International Meeting of Religions and Cultures in Dialogue in Germany*

“The Audacity of Peace,” the 37th International Meeting of Religions and Cultures in Dialogue, was held from 10–12 September 2023 in Berlin, Germany. The meeting was hosted by the Community of Sant’Egidio, a Catholic lay organization based in Italy and involved in international humanitarian aid and other activities. SGI representatives attended the conference along with representatives of Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist and other religious groups from over 40 countries.

Twenty thematic forums were held during the conference, including sessions on climate change, migration and interreligious dialogue. At the session titled “A World Free from Nuclear Weapons Is Possible” on 11 September, SGI Europe Co-chair Robert Harrap was a panelist.

Harrap noted the importance of sharing a vision for peace. He also introduced SGI’s work toward realizing a world without nuclear weapons, which is based on the Buddhist principle of respect for the dignity of life. In light of the international community’s steady progress in signing and ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), Harrap stressed the importance of holding on to hope, no matter how many challenges may lie ahead. He concluded by calling for expanding the dialogue to create a new phase of human history that is based on equality, respect and cherishing the dignity of life.



The 37th International Meeting of Religions and Cultures in Dialogue

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DEC | JORDAN

Joint Music Education Program “*Music Brings Us Together*” Completes Its Third Year

Supported by Soka Gakkai and run by Musicians Without Borders (MWB), the *Al-Musiqa Tajm’ana: “Music Brings Us Together”* program in Jordan completed its third year of implementation in 2023.

Launched in 2021, the project aims to create a network of local musicians and music teachers who use music as a tool to enhance social inclusion by stimulating creative development and bringing hope and joy to children and youth in marginalized refugee and host communities. During the first three years, 91 trainees participated as primary beneficiaries in the training courses, which included two curricula: “Music Leadership Training” and “Music as Therapy.”

The trainees have implemented about 400 music workshops in total, which positively impacted more than 1,200 children of different backgrounds and origins including Egyptians, Iraqis, Jordanians, Palestinians and Syrians. The music activities learned in the program include body percussion, rhythm, movement to music, songwriting, composing and music games.

The second phase of the program will launch in 2024, putting more emphasis on children with special needs, orphans, and formerly incarcerated youth, in addition to strengthening the network of music trainers.



“*Music Brings Us Together*” trainees

Since the affirmation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) in 2018, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has encouraged States, organizations, businesses, academics and refugees themselves to submit pledges to work toward advancing its objectives. In light of the “*Music Brings Us Together*” program’s first phase outcomes, the Soka Gakkai and MWB submitted a joint pledge to the *Second Global Refugee Forum* (GRF), which was held from 13–15 December 2023 in Geneva. They pledged to continue delivering this service to more than 300 children in refugee and host communities each year.

Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment



MAR | NEW YORK, USA

Discussing Technology Risks and Potential for Gender Equality at CSW67

Over 7,000 participants gathered at UN Headquarters for the first fully in-person UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) session since 2019. The sixty-seventh session of CSW took place from 6–17 March 2023, and civil society organizations held over 700 parallel events, in person and virtually, for the NGO CSW67 Forum.

The Commission adopted Agreed Conclusions on the theme of “Innovation and Technological Change, and Education in the Digital Age for Achieving Gender Equality and The Empowerment of all Women and Girls.” CSW67 offered an opportunity to address new and emerging challenges and to share intersectional, human rights-based and feminist approaches to digital technology, including artificial intelligence (AI). Women and girls experience disproportionate challenges in the digital age, such as those related to the right to privacy and safety of online spaces and technological tools.

Ivy Koek of SGI delivered an oral statement, speaking on behalf of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York (NGO CSW/ NY). The statement included the achievements by the Committee, which organizes the NGO Forum. It read, in part, “From personal experience, we can attest to the positive contributions of technology.



Ivy Koek of SGI delivering an oral statement on behalf of the NGO CSW/NY

Our constituencies grew four-fold. Three years ago, when doors seemed to have closed for civil society to engage at the UN, we opened doors through Zoom meetings.” Held in a hybrid format for the first time, the Forum had over 14,000 virtual registrants.

The NGO CSW/NY Advocacy and Research Group, which Koek led as Co-chair, submitted five “Key Recommendations for the CSW67 Zero Draft” prior to the session for Member States to consider. The Committee also made three requests pertaining to every CSW, one of which is that violence against women and girls and gender-based violence be standing agenda items at the CSW.

To address such challenges, SGI organized a parallel event, “*Women’s Leadership for Human-Centered Technology*,” which Stop Killer Robots (SKR), NGO CSW/NY and Footage Foundation co-sponsored. Panelists spoke on the potential dangers of technology if it is used to harm, but also presented an example of how it can be used as a force for good.

Paloma Lara-Castro, Public Policy Coordinator for Derechos Digitales, talked about the need to address social inequalities and asserted that structural inequalities, such as surveillance, need to be controlled through legal frameworks. Participants then viewed a video of an interview series on digital dehumanisation hosted by Hayley Ramsay-Jones of SGI. Isabelle Jones, SKR Campaign Outreach Manager, followed, sharing that weapon systems are at the

extreme end on the spectrum of autonomy. If not controlled, Jones stated, machines will decide who to kill, which is very concerning, as technology entails bias and risk. Next, Kristen Eglinton, co-founder of Footage Foundation, offered an example of a positive use of technology. Footage Foundation created *FemSMS*, which is being used in Ukraine to share resources and compassionate information with women through text messaging. This is the first time a human-centered design process has been used to build a gender-sensitive SMS platform in a war zone.

At the end of the parallel event, participants shared impressions and posed questions to panelists on digital dehumanisation and principles needed to keep humanity at the heart of the digital devices and spaces we create.



“Key Recommendations for the CSW67 Zero Draft” served as the expert panel topic for the NGO CSW67 Forum Consultation Day

JUL-OCT | NEW YORK, USA & KIGALI, RWANDA

NGO CSW/NY New Leadership and Launch of Working Group on Peace and Gender Equality

In July 2023, Ivy Koek of SGI and Pamela Morgan of Zonta International started a two-year term as Co-chairs of the NGO CSW/NY. The *10-member Executive Committee* embarked on new initiatives, including building and strengthening alliances and collaborations with other NGO coalitions; developing a five-year strategic plan; creating an NGO CSW Hub; and establishing five working groups (WG).

The NGO CSW/NY monthly meeting held in *September* focused on the Working Group on Peace and Gender Equality. Koek moderated a discussion with Phoebe Donnelly, Senior Fellow and Head of

Women, Peace and Security at the International Peace Institute, and Eloisa Romani, Project Coordinator for the Strategic Concept for the Removal of Arms and Proliferation (SCRAP) project, who shared their gender analyses of the Secretary-General’s *New Agenda for Peace*. Donnelly was pleased to see the document included language around dismantling “the patriarchy and oppressive power structures that stand in the way of gender equality,” though she shared her disappointment that it gave no specific recommendation for how to address this. Romani commented on the failure of National Action Plans to affirm the relationship between peace, disarmament and



CSW67 parallel event “*Women’s Leadership for Human-Centered Technology*” organized by SGI



Peace rally marking the 23rd anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325

the advancement of the status of women, girls, and marginalized communities, given that “adopting disarmament measures is crucial to challenging the patriarchal culture of weapons possession.”

Sylvie Jacqueline Ndongmo, a feminist peace activist from Cameroon, and President of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), concluded the program by sharing her thoughts on the SDG Summit that took place at UN Headquarters in September.

NGO CSW/NY created the Working Group on Peace and Gender Equality to bring peace and security discussions as they relate to women and girls to the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Co-chaired by Koek and Rahel Beigel of the Women’s Refugee Commission, the WG officially launched on 19 July 2023 at a side event in the UN Foundation Nest Hub, held during the *Women Deliver conference* in

Kigali, Rwanda. The event included a fireside chat with three feminist peace activists from Cameroon, Liberia and Syria sharing their experiences and perspectives from the field. A group discussion followed, addressing action points for advocacy and ways forward for the WG.

As one of the WG’s initiatives, *NGO CSW/NY held its first peace rally* to mark the 23rd anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Held on 25 October, the Rally for Peace took place at the Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, down the street from where the UN Security Council Annual Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security was being held. Over 70 attendees made calls for peace. Ten organizations and committees cosponsored the rally, including the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO), which SGI serves as a Board member.

JUL | TOKYO, JAPAN

Creating the Culture of Peace: Women’s Peace Committee Holds Forum on Children’s Rights and Addressing Poverty in Japan

On 5 July 2023, the Soka Gakkai Women’s Peace Committee (WPC) held a forum on children’s rights as part of its “Culture of Peace” lecture series. These lectures, ongoing since 2011, cover a variety of topics and engage a large number of WPC members and the general public throughout Japan.

To open the event, Atsuko Harada, a member of the WPC, shared her experience of working at a childcare facility that cares for children during after-school hours. The key that enables children to lead hopeful and fulfilling lives, she said, is unwavering support and compassion from adults who believe in every child’s unlimited inherent potential.

The lecturer, Professor Kaori Suetomi of Nihon University, spoke

about the Basic Act for Children and the Children and Families Agency, which were established in Japan in April 2023. Suetomi stressed that the establishment of these legal institutions marked a significant milestone of policy related to children in Japan, providing the basic foundation to promote and protect children’s rights in accord with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. She spoke about relative and multidimensional poverty, as well as how to realize a truly “children-first” society, which she said requires adopting a comprehensive policy approach that encompasses support for children with respect to their living environments, isolation in schools and homes, as well as health and security, among other factors.



Professor Kaori Suetomi of Nihon University at the forum on children’s rights

Humanitarian Relief



MAR | SENDAI, JAPAN

Disaster Risk Reduction Events in Sendai

In March 2023, various events were held in Sendai, Japan, to commemorate the twelfth anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake and promote the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR).

One such event, the third World Bosai Forum, took place on 12 March. Since 2017, the biennial forum has brought together representatives of academia, civil society and business to share and explore DRR strategies.

SGI hosted a discussion session at SFDRR, “Approach to Psychosocial Recovery After Catastrophic Events,” attended by about 20 people. Fabienne van Eck, Regional Program Manager of Musicians Without Borders (MWB) for the Middle East, introduced MWB’s programs and methods that aim to create positive change by developing connection, resilience and a sense of safety through music for those affected by war, conflict and displacement.

Nobuyuki Asai, the SGI’s Director of Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Affairs, spoke about the “*Bonds of Hope*” concerts conducted by the Soka Gakkai Music Corps, a continuing initiative contributing to the “recovery of the heart” in disaster-affected areas in Japan.

Professor Takeo Fujiwara of Tokyo Medical and Dental University then introduced the results of

his research into changes in the psychological state of children who experienced the Great East Japan Earthquake over the 10-year period following the disaster. His research identified a higher suicide rate among such children and a weakened sense of self-control. Fujiwara emphasized the importance of continuous psychosocial support for children affected by disasters.

Earlier, on 4 March, members of the Soka Gakkai’s local youth division organized a session titled “Promoting the Recovery of the Heart through Music,” as part of the Sendai Bosai Mirai Forum. This annual event aims to share the lessons learned from the disaster and develop a broader network of those involved in DRR efforts. Producer Keiichi Shigano shared his understanding of the value of such activities and the role of art, including music, in DRR.

Lastly, Soka Gakkai youth hosted a seminar on 18 March, where Dr. Sébastien Penmellen Boret, Associate Professor at the International Research Institute of Disaster Science at Tohoku University, emphasized the importance of person-to-person ties in local communities, especially in times of disaster.

Watch the
Bonds of Hope
concert series



FEB-MAR | SANTO DOMINGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

“Restoring Our Humanity” Exhibition in Dominican Republic

The exhibition *“Restoring Our Humanity.”* jointly created by SGI and the Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network, was held at the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo (UASD) in the Dominican Republic from 23 February to 4 March 2023.

The opening ceremony was attended by Dr. Rosalia Sosa Pérez, Vice Rector of UASD; Dr. Modesto Cruz, Vice President of the Academy of Sciences of the Dominican Republic; Masahiro Takagi, Ambassador of Japan to the Dominican Republic; and Pedro Familia, Director General of SGI Dominican Republic.

The 20-panel exhibition was produced in response to the first World Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul, Turkey, in May 2016. In addition to highlighting individual

and community-level initiatives, the exhibition recommends what can be done at those levels based on input from people on the front lines of humanitarian crises—aid workers, disaster-affected communities and refugees—and encourages people to work together to find humanistic solutions to today’s challenges.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Dr. Sosa Pérez commended SGI for its efforts to make the culture of peace a reality, and Ambassador Takagi commented on the exhibition’s significance in reminding us of fundamental values in times of conflict and international tension. Lastly, Familia expressed his hope that the exhibition would help strengthen individuals’ commitment to create a better world for all.



Guests are shown around the “Restoring Our Humanity” exhibition

View the exhibition



MAY | HIROSHIMA, JAPAN

Exhibition Highlights ICRC’s Humanitarian and Nuclear Disarmament Contributions

On 9 May 2023, “Promises to Ensure Peace,” a new exhibition jointly created by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and SGI, opened at the Hiroshima Ikeda Peace Memorial Hall, concurrent with the G7 Summit being held in the city. At the opening ceremony, ICRC Head of Delegation in Japan Jordi Raich emphasized that peace means ensuring everyone can live a life of dignity, free from conflict and fear.

The two-part exhibition introduces ICRC’s humanitarian efforts in Ukraine and support for nuclear abolition from ICRC and SGI. The first part, “Lost Daily Life: Ukraine Today,” portrays through photos and videos the impact of conflict on the daily lives of people in Ukraine and the provision of humanitarian assistance. The second part, “Nuclear Weapons: A Threat to Humanity—Are They Really Necessary?” aims to provoke thought and discussion about the inhumanity of nuclear weapons and the urgency of disarmament.

As the guardian of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), ICRC has called for a ban on nuclear weapons from a humanitarian perspective since 1945, when it provided medical supplies and equipment to the victims of the first nuclear bombings. In April 2010, in a statement to the Geneva Diplomatic Corps, then ICRC President Jakob Kellenberger highlighted the unacceptable

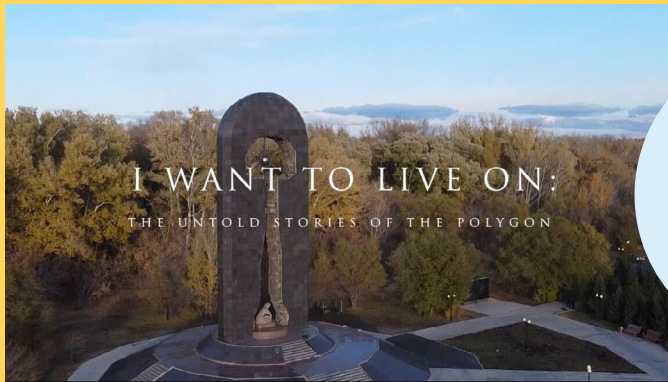


Visitors viewing the “Promises to Ensure Peace” exhibition in Hiroshima

humanitarian damage caused by nuclear weapons and called on the international community to take immediate action. This statement marked a significant turning point in the global discussion on ridding the world of nuclear weapons.

More recently, ICRC created a blog titled *“Religion and Humanitarian Principles”* with a collection of contributions that explore the relationship between IHL and the teachings of various faiths, including an article by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda that draws upon a Buddhist perspective.

Featured Resources



Watch the documentary



I Want To Live On: *The Untold Stories of the Polygon*

Through powerful testimonial evidence, this documentary film highlights the lasting suffering caused by nuclear testing at the Semipalatinsk Test Site, affecting individuals in Kazakhstan across three generations to this day.

Created by the [Center for International Security and Policy](#) with the support of SGI.



Watch Changemakers



Changemakers: *Stories of Young Human Rights Educators*

“Changemakers: Stories of Young Human Rights Educators,” is a multimedia educational tool jointly developed by the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR), [Amnesty International](#) and SGI.

The film features the stories of seven young human rights educators from around the world. For further resources, visit the [Human Rights Education Open Resource](#).



View the exhibition



Automated by Design | *Exhibition Microsite*

This experience is a digital version of our [in-person exhibition](#) that explores [digital dehumanisation](#) - the process by which humans are reduced to data, which is then used to make decisions or take actions that negatively affect their lives.

Automated by Design was curated and produced by [Identity 2.0](#) for [Stop Killer Robots](#) and supported by [Amnesty International](#) and SGI.



Listen to the podcast



Uniting Nations *Podcast*

SGI and [The Metta Center for Nonviolence](#) have partnered to create *Uniting Nations*, a podcast series that explores the intersection of nonviolence and the goals of the United Nations.

Anna Ikeda of SGI serves as the show’s cohost, together with Stephanie Van Hook, Executive Director of The Metta Center.



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