

The People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition – reference material

Extract from Josei Toda's 'Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons'

'...I would like to share with you what I hope you will regard as the first of my final instructions for the future. As I have long said, the responsibility for the coming era will be shouldered by the youth. There is no need for me to tell you that kosen-rufu is our mission. We must absolutely achieve it. But today I would like to state clearly my feelings and attitude regarding the testing of nuclear weapons, a topic that is now being heatedly debated in society. I hope that as my disciples, you will inherit the declaration I am about to make today and, to the best of your ability, spread its intent throughout the world.' (8/09/1957)

Extracts from 'The Human Revolution', Daisaku Ikeda

'It is deeply significant that Josei Toda made the first of his final precepts to the youth in the form of a declaration against nuclear weapons. Because Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is a religion that exists for the people, the fulfilment of its religious mission to establish the correct teaching must be accompanied by the construction of a peaceful land. In other words, the establishment of Nichiren's Buddhism can only be truly realised when the people who practice it fulfil their respective missions in the realm of society. Toda was fully aware that behind the existence of nuclear weapons lurked the devilish nature of dwelling in human life itself. He sensed that the only way to defeat this devilish tendency was through the power of the Buddha nature also inherent in people's lives. Since human beings created the atomic bomb, human beings must also make possible its abolition. Toda was thus convinced that it is the existence of the Buddha nature within human beings that would guarantee the abolition of nuclear weapons without fail. Through his declaration, Toda entrusted the youth with the task of inspiring this conviction in others, urging them to conduct dialogue based on a belief in people's Buddha nature, to address that Buddha nature and communicate to them the absolute evil of nuclear weapons. Later, Toda's declaration would become the basis for the Soka Gakkai's movement for peace.... Shin'ichi almost trembled with resolve as he listened to Toda's declaration. He told himself that he must, without fail, fulfil his mentor's dream. From this day on he began to search with desperate earnestness for a way to spread Toda's conviction throughout the world.'

Extracts from Sensei's editorial in the Japan Times 'Emerging from the Nuclear Shadow' (14/9/2006)

'Peace is a competition between hope and despair, between disempowerment and committed persistence. To the degree that powerlessness takes root in people's consciousness, there is a greater tendency to resort to force. Powerlessness breeds violence. But it was human beings that gave birth to these instruments of hellish destruction. It cannot be beyond the power of human wisdom to eliminate them.'

'If we are to eliminate nuclear weapons, a fundamental transformation of the human spirit is essential. Since the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki more than 60 years ago, the survivors have transformed despair into a sense of mission as they have continued to call out for nuclear abolition. As people living today, it is our shared responsibility – our duty and our right – to act as heirs to this lofty work of inner transformation, to expand and elevate it into a struggle to eliminate war itself.'

'Crying out in opposition to war and nuclear weapons is neither emotionalism nor self-pity. It is the highest expression of human reason based on an unflinching perception of the dignity of life. Faced with the horrifying facts of nuclear proliferation, we must call forth the power of hope from within the depths of each individual's life. This is the power that can transform even the most intractable reality. To emerge from the nuclear shadow we need a revolution in the consciousness of countless individuals – a revolution that gives rise to the heartfelt confidence that "There is something I can do." Then, finally, we will see a coming together of the world's people, and hear their common voice, their cry for an end to this terrible madness of destruction.'

Extracts from SGI President Ikeda's Proposal 'Building Global Solidarity toward Nuclear Abolition' (synopsis) (8/09/2009).

'If nuclear weapons epitomize the forces that would divide and destroy the world, they can only be overcome by the solidarity of ordinary citizens, which transforms hope into the energy to create a new era.'

'...If we are to put the era of nuclear terror behind us, we must struggle against the real "enemy". That enemy is not nuclear weapons per se, nor is it the states that possess or develop them. The real enemy that we must confront is the ways of thinking that justify nuclear weapons; the readiness to annihilate others when they are seen as a threat or as a hindrance to the realisation of our objectives.'

'...Let us abandon the habit of studiously ignoring the menace posed to the Earth by nuclear weapons and instead demonstrate that a world without nuclear weapons can indeed be realised in our lifetimes.

Raising one's voice or taking action is something we all can do. All that is required are the natural feelings shared by people everywhere: the desire to live in peace, the wish to protect those we love, the determination to spare the world's children needless suffering.

It is the passion of youth that spreads the flames of courage throughout society. This courage, transmitted from one person to the next, can melt the daunting walls of difficulty and open the horizons on a new era in human history. Based on the proud determination to make the struggle for nuclear abolition the foundation for a world without war, and convinced that participation in this unprecedented undertaking is the greatest gift we can offer the future, I call on people of goodwill everywhere to work towards the realization of a world finally free from the menace of nuclear weapons.'

Extracts from SGI President Ikeda's 2011 Peace Proposal

'Where there is an absence of international political leadership, civil society should step in to fill the gap, providing the energy and vision needed to move the world in a new and better direction. I believe that we need a paradigm shift, a recognition that the essence of leadership is found in ordinary individuals – whoever and wherever they may be – fulfilling the role that is theirs alone to play.'

'...Today we stand at a watershed moment. We have before us the potential to bring the era of nuclear weapons to an end through a treaty that comprehensively bans them. We must not allow this historic opportunity to pass.'

'...But what is important now is that more and more people awaken to a sense of personal outrage at the continued existence of nuclear weapons and thus become

moved to exercise proactive and transformative leadership. I would therefore like to propose the following as a focus for popular solidarity in the rejection of nuclear weapons:

- 1) No country and no leader has the right to use nuclear weapons, which can instantly rob untold numbers of citizens of their lives and futures.
- 2) Security arrangements cannot be based on the foundation of nuclear weapons. Even if they are not used, nuclear weapons have through their development and testing caused grave damage to people's health and the natural environment and, by their very existence, act as a continual spur to military escalation and proliferation.
- 3) We reject, as undermining the ability of humankind to coexist in peace, the mind-set that places no limits on the actions that can be taken in the name of protecting one's own security and interests and those of one's country – a way of thinking embodied in the possession of nuclear weapons.

These three statements express the humanitarian principle in its broadest sense – that is the refusal to seek one's own happiness at the expense of others – as well as the goal of human security, which is to protect the dignity of life in all circumstances.'

'...The crucial thing is to arouse the awareness that, as a matter of human conscience, we can never permit the people of any country to fall victim to nuclear weapons, and for each individual to express their refusal to continue living in the shadow they pose. We must each make a personal decision and determination to build a new world free of nuclear weapons. The accumulated weight of such choices made by individual citizens can be the basis and foundation for a Nuclear Weapons Convention.'

'...The time is indeed ripe for global civil society to take united action. The SGI will continue to promote the People's Decade, with a particular focus on efforts to bring a Nuclear Weapons Convention into being. With our youth members in the lead, we are determined to build momentum toward 2015, the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and toward a world free of nuclear weapons'.

What is the People's Decade?

The aim of the People's Decade is to increase the number of people who reject nuclear weapons. Ordinary citizens and civil society must be the protagonists, creating a groundswell of demand for nuclear abolition that will influence decision makers.

In August 2006, in a proposal for reform of the United Nations, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda put forward the idea of a UN decade of action by the world's people for abolition of nuclear weapons.

In line with his idea, SGI launched the People's Decade in September 2007, collaborating with international antinuclear movements such as the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) initiated by International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW).

The launch coincided with the 50th anniversary of the 1957 antinuclear declaration made by second president of the Soka Gakkai Josei Toda and featured the opening of an exhibition "From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace: Transforming the Human Spirit" (THS) in New York at a civil society forum to galvanize public opinion

toward the abolition of nuclear weapons and the creation of a culture of peace, specifically aimed at mobilizing youth. Since its launch, the exhibition has been shown in more than 200 cities in 25 countries. (www.peoplesdecade.org)

In the UK, as well as at Taplow Court, the exhibition has been installed at the University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and at Roehampton University. At SOAS SGI-UK Youth Peace Committee collaborated with Student Pugwash UK to host a Youth forum to discuss nuclear abolition and hear from expert speakers. A similar forum was organised at Roehampton together with the University's Human Rights Society – in total more than 1000 people saw the exhibition at these events.

SGI-UK Youth Peace Committee

Inspired by Sensei's September 2009 Proposal calling on the youth to take the lead in establishing global solidarity towards nuclear abolition by 2015, SGI-UK Youth Division established a Youth Peace Committee made up of younger youth and student division members. Committee members participate in meetings and activities for a dedicated 2 year period.

One purpose of this committee is to meet to study and deepen our understanding of Sensei's proposals and writings on establishing a world without nuclear weapons and true lasting peace based on respect for the dignity of life, and to discuss and propose practical steps, actions and activities to realise this vision. Another purpose of this committee is to take responsibility for action for our established national activities for peace and nuclear abolition (e.g the Peace Proposal Symposium, the National Hiroshima Peace Day and installations of the THS exhibition).

The committee was launched at the 2010 National Hiroshima Peace Day and has been working towards the 2011 Hiroshima Peace Day to announce various initiatives it has been working on that could be taken up by interested SGI-UK members in local grassroots activities to support the People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition.

Hiroshima Peace Day

This was established as a meeting in 2005 in South London, to commemorate the 2005 60th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Japan, by SGI-UK South London members Alex Giles and Ali Bailey following a visit to Hiroshima and its the Peace centre. It continued as an annual commemorative meeting with the aim of re-inspiring and educating ourselves on the issue of Nuclear Abolition from a Buddhist perspective, based on studying President Ikeda's Annual Peace Proposal.

Since becoming a National SGI-UK activity in 2010, the meeting is also a focus for reporting on our activities in support of the People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition and for inspiration towards future SGI-UK activities towards the goal of a Nuclear Weapons Convention in 2015 as proposed by President Ikeda in his 2009 Proposal 'Building Global Solidarity towards Nuclear Abolition'.

Our aim is also that this year's 2011 Hiroshima Peace Day will serve as an inspiration for more local or 'regional' commemorative meetings across the UK in 2012.