



Soka Gakkai
International
Action for Peace

Peace *Activities*

Annual Report 2022

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

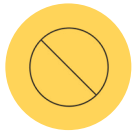
Beginning in 1983, over a period of 40 years, annual peace proposals were authored by Daisaku Ikeda, the president of SGI. These proposals, as well as statements he continues to issue, serve to guide the SGI's work at the UN. They also inform the activities undertaken by local Soka Gakkai organizations around the world. *Peace proposals* dating from 2000 to the present are available for download.

The peace proposals have 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 compilation of 30 years of proposals addressing the United Nations was published as *A Forum for Peace*.

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.



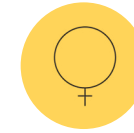
Sustainable Development & Climate Change

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.



Eva Kaprinay

SGI President Calls on States to Commit to “No First Use” of Nuclear Weapons in Series of Statements

Since July 2022, Daisaku Ikeda, president of SGI, has issued three statements calling for nuclear weapon states to pledge No First Use of these weapons to avoid catastrophe, defuse the climate of mutual fear and promote nuclear disarmament.

The first statement was issued on 26 July 2022, ahead of the Tenth NPT (Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons) Review Conference that began on 1 August at UN Headquarters in New York. It called on the five nuclear-weapon states to declare that they will never be the first to use nuclear weapons in conflict: the principle of “No First Use.”

Amidst the heightened risk of the use of nuclear weapons, the statement urged that the following points be included in the Final Document of the Review Conference:

- That the five nuclear-weapon states pledge to continue to abide by their January 2022 Joint Statement on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races, immediately pursuing measures to reduce the risks posed by nuclear weapons in accord with their Article VI nuclear disarmament commitments.
- That the five nuclear-weapon states, as a matter of highest priority, declare their commitment to the principle of No First Use at the earliest possible date.
- That in order to solidify the Joint Statement’s declaration that “none of our nuclear weapons are targeted at each other or at any other State,” all states possessing nuclear weapons, as well as the nuclear-dependent states, must make No First Use their universal security policy.

On 11 January 2023, Ikeda issued his second statement on No First



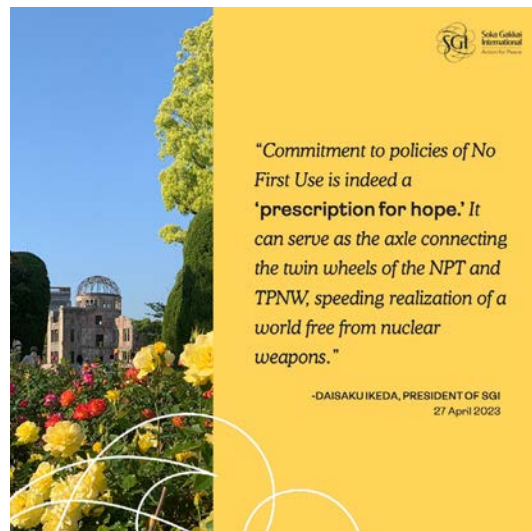
Disarmament

Use, decrying the cruelty and misery of war, calling for action aimed at restoring peace in Ukraine and urging steps to lessen the risk of the use of nuclear weapons. It called for the foreign ministers of Russia, Ukraine and other key countries to urgently hold a meeting under UN auspices to reach agreement on a cessation of hostilities. Ikeda's statement called for action that would harness the synergistic effects of the NPT and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) toward the realization of a world free from nuclear weapons.

The third statement, issued on 27 April 2023, called on the leaders of the G7 countries meeting in Hiroshima from 19-21 May to take bold steps toward resolving the conflict in Ukraine and guarantee the security of all humanity by taking

the lead in discussions on pledges of No First Use of nuclear weapons. Ikeda warned that with the taboo against the use of nuclear weapons being eroded among the nuclear-weapon states, and frameworks for managing and reducing nuclear arsenals verging on collapse, there has never been a greater need to establish policies of No First Use. Regarding Ukraine, the statement urged that the G7 Hiroshima Summit provide a "prescription for hope" by working for an immediate cessation of attacks on civilian infrastructure and developing concrete plans for negotiations that would lead to a cessation of hostilities.

*Read all
No First Use
Statements*



*Avoiding
Nuclear War*
What Short-Term
Steps Can be Taken?



Stop Killer Robots



Launch of Immoral Code at the Prince Charles Cinema in London's Leicester Square

LONDON, UK

SGI Supports Launch of Immoral Code, Film Calling for New International Law on Autonomous Weapons Systems

Immoral Code, a 23-minute documentary that raises important questions about how far we are prepared to let machines make decisions of life and death, was launched for online viewing on 24 May 2022. The film cleverly demonstrates the complexity of human decision-making and the dangers posed by autonomous weapons that could “decide” who to kill.

Immoral Code was produced by Stop Killer Robots, a global coalition of more than 180 NGOs and academic partners working to

ensure meaningful human control over the use of force through the development of new international law. SGI has been an international member of Stop Killer Robots since 2018. Hayley Ramsay-Jones of SGI, as a member of the Stop Killer Robots Working Group on Intersectionality, advised the filmmakers on issues related to representation, race and gender.

An in-person launch of *Immoral Code* was held on 19 May 2022 at the Prince Charles Cinema in London's Leicester Square, followed by a panel of experts who stressed

our universal vulnerability and the urgent need for internationally binding legislation. SGI supported the film launch, along with Amnesty International, Article 36, Human Rights Watch, Mines Action Canada and Privacy International.

On 29 October 2022, the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee in Japan organized an online screening of *Immoral Code* as a part of its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Online Cinema Series. SDG 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies and reduce all

forms of violence; screenings of *Immoral Code* support this goal by preventing potential violence that killer robots could cause in the future. Following the screening, Yuki Sakurai, Program Coordinator at Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR Japan) and steering group member of Stop Killer Robots, spoke on the challenges posed by killer robots, including legal and security aspects, human control of weapon systems, gender inequality and algorithmic bias.

VIENNA, AUSTRIA

SGI Actively Participates in Historic First Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW

Several key meetings took place in Vienna, Austria between 18–23 June 2022, including the historic First Meeting of States Parties (1MSP) to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which was held from 21–23 June.

The week began with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Nuclear Ban Forum on 18–19 June, followed by the Austrian Government's Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, a Parliamentarian Conference on 20 June and, finally, the Youth MSP on 21 June.

Throughout the week, representatives of SGI worked with governments and civil society groups to call for the universalization of and compliance with the TPNW. Highlights of SGI's activities at 1MSP

included co-authoring a working paper on peace and disarmament education with the International Disarmament Institute of Pace University.

The paper highlighted the importance of peace and disarmament education and made several recommendations to States Parties, including supporting survivors, affected communities, civil society, youth and educational institutions promoting such education.



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Presenting the Joint Interfaith Statement to President of 1MSP Ambassador Alexander Kmentt

On 21 June, SGI co-sponsored a side event with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, the Permanent Mission of Kiribati to the United Nations and the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. The event promoted victim assistance, environmental remediation and international cooperation in line with Articles 6 and 7 of the TPNW.

Also on 21 June, the SGI youth delegation worked with representatives from the anti-nuclear campaign Senzatomica and held a workshop on grassroots educational movements at the Youth MSP. Participants discussed reshaping the discourse around nuclear weapons and alternative educational approaches to empower learners.

SGI also worked on a *joint interfaith statement* that was delivered at the 1MSP on 22 June by Olivia Baro, a youth representative of the Pacific Conference of Churches. Signed by 144 organizations from diverse faith traditions, the statement highlighted the immoral and unethical nature of nuclear weapons and urged wider ratification of the TPNW. Additionally, SGI helped to draft and endorse the *youth statement* to the MSP.

The 1MSP concluded with the Vienna Declaration and the Vienna Action Plan, both adopted by States Parties to the TPNW. These documents are widely considered to be the strongest multilateral documents on nuclear weapons thus far.

UN HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK, USA

SGI Advocates for No First Use and Joins Interfaith Initiatives at the NPT Review Conference

During the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) that took place in August 2022 at UN Headquarters in New York, SGI organized a side event sponsored by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, “Avoiding Nuclear War: What Short-Term Steps Can Be Taken?” Moderated by Anna Ikeda of SGI, the event was co-sponsored by the Arms Control Association (ACA), Council on Strategic Risks (CSR), Institute of World Economics and Politics (IWEP) and International Peace and Understanding (IPU).

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Magzhan Ilyassov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the UN, stressed the importance of educating and engaging the public on the issue of nuclear weapons.

The three panelists—Christine Parthemore of CSR, Yerzhan Saltybayev of IEWP, and Alexander Harang of IPU—shared various perspectives on the theme of the event, including the importance of consistency in both doctrines and effective plans regarding nuclear weapons, pursuing a legally binding commitment for No First Use, and elevating the role of the non-nuclear-weapon states.

Serving as a discussant, Daryl Kimball of ACA noted measures



The side event, “Avoiding Nuclear War: What Short-Term Steps Can Be Taken?”

that can be taken to reduce risk, such as establishing direct lines of communication, resuming dialogue, and refraining from provocative actions among nuclear-weapon states.

Nearly 90 participants, including representatives from States Parties and civil society, crowded the conference room where the event was held, demonstrating great interest in the topic. Audience members actively engaged in the discussion and raised questions, such as the role of faith communities and the general public in advancing nuclear disarmament.

In addition, SGI helped to draft the Joint Interfaith Statement to the NPT Review Conference, which was endorsed by 104 organizations from various faith



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SGI representatives participating in the first meeting of states parties to the TPNW

traditions, including Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism. The statement urged the delegations at the Review Conference to heed the voices of hibakusha (survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) and other affected communities. It implored delegations to commit to concrete actions to prevent any possibility of escalation toward a nuclear war; to fulfill commitments and obligations for nuclear disarmament under Article VI of the NPT; and to support other international instruments that complement such obligations, including the TPNW and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

The statement was delivered during the NGO statement presentations at the conference plenary session on 5 August.

SGI also joined other groups to support the first annual Nuclear Prayer Day, an initiative spearheaded by Voices, on and around 6 August. On 5 August, SGI co-sponsored the Nuclear Prayer Day-Hiroshima/Nagasaki Interfaith Peace Gathering held at the Tillman Chapel of the Church Center for the UN, where Chie Sunada of the Soka Gakkai Women's Peace Committee read the Joint Interfaith Statement to the NPT to attendees.

(SGM) Secretary-General Tan Leng introduced SGM's commitment to support the government in implementing its obligations under the TPNW. He shared SGI and SGM's nuclear disarmament initiatives, such as ideas in SGI President Daisaku Ikeda's peace proposals, the exhibition "Everything You Treasure—For a World Free From Nuclear

Weapons," interfaith dialogues and seminars, documentaries and radio interviews. Leng explained that Buddhism values the dignity of each individual's life and the concept of the interconnectedness of life. He concluded, "Therefore, from the Buddhist perspective, the TPNW is indispensable in protecting not only the peace of mankind as a whole, but also the preservation of the global ecosystem, which is the basis of life."

ONLINE

SGI Representative Hosts New Stop Killer Robots Series on Digital Dehumanisation

The *Digital Dehumanisation Campaign (DDC)* launched by the Stop Killer Robots coalition (SKR) of which SGI is a member, examines killer robots through the lens of digital dehumanisation. It highlights the human cost of machines processing people as objects, framing the issue in the context of present-day reality rather than treating it as an abstract, futuristic problem.

Digital dehumanisation, as defined by SKR, is the process where humans are reduced to data, which is then used to make decisions and/or take actions that affect our lives. This process deprives people of dignity, demeans individuals' humanity and removes or replaces human involvement or responsibility through automated decision making in technology.

Launched on 7 December 2022, SKR's Digital Dehumanisation



Stop Killer Robots

Hayley Ramsay-Jones of SGI interviewing Dr. Catherine Connolly

Campaign aims to increase public awareness of these threats. Slated to run for six to eight months, the DDC features six pieces of fact-based video content to educate the public as well as lobbyists and lawmakers. Hayley Ramsay-Jones of SGI is the host in all six videos.

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

Soka Gakkai Malaysia Joins Interfaith Conference on TPNW

An interfaith conference on the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) titled "National Implementation and the Role of Youth" took place at the Senate Hall of the International

Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) on 1 August 2022. Speakers and representatives from universities and non-governmental organizations explored youth advocacy towards eliminating nuclear weapons during the two-day event, which was facilitated by the National Chairperson of the Malaysian Red Crescent Society (MRCS) and Tunku Temenggong Kedah, YTM Dato' Seri DiRaja Tan Sri Tunku Puteri Intan Safinaz binti Almarhum Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah.

During a panel discussion on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, Soka Gakkai Malaysia



Malaysia Soka Gakkai

Interfaith conference on the TPNW held at the Islamic University of Malaysia

The first output in this series is an explainer report, titled *“Autonomous Weapons and Digital Dehumanisation,”* which describes digital dehumanisation as it relates to killer robots. In the *first video*, Ramsay-Jones interviews Dr. Catherine Connolly, the SKR Automated Decision Research Manager, who authored the report.

Videos two and three were released in early January 2023. The *second*

video features an interview with street artist YAYA (known as the “Street Autist”), whose comic strip 1001 Gossip Grove explored the erosion of privacy within the home. The *third* shows an interview with Matthew Guariglia, Policy Analyst and historian at the Electronic Frontier Foundation, who authored the article *“Robots in the Age of Digital Surveillance, Digital Surveillance in the Age of Robots.”*

GERMANY, JAPAN, KAZAKHSTAN, MEXICO & SPAIN

“Everything You Treasure” Exhibition Showings Around the World

“Everything You Treasure—For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons,” an exhibition jointly created by SGI and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), was shown at various locations around the world in 2022, including Japan, Spain, Germany, Mexico and Kazakhstan. Launched in 2012, it examines the nuclear weapons issue from 12 perspectives, including gender, health and environmental impact, and it promotes ways individuals can join the effort to abolish nuclear weapons.

From 30 March to 7 April 2022, the exhibition ran at the University of La Salle in Madrid, Spain, in conjunction with an interfaith symposium organized by the university’s Institute for Studies of Religions in the Contemporary World (IERMA). The symposium explored the role of religions toward realizing the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), motivated by the conviction that the world’s diverse religious traditions have a central role to play in building more ethical and just societies. Representatives of Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism participated in the interfaith event, which concluded with poetry and music performed by members of Soka Gakkai Spain. Carlos Esteban Garcés, Director of IERMA, commented that the exhibition’s message promoting world peace and nuclear abolition was timely and significant.

The exhibition was also shown at the University of Guanajuato in Mexico from 8 to 23 September 2022. Dr. José Maldonado Salas, General Coordinator of Academic Development at the university, delivered welcoming remarks at the



Opening ceremony of the “Everything You Treasure” exhibition in Astana, Kazakhstan

opening ceremony. On 8 September, Soka Gakkai Mexico also organized an online seminar on peace and nuclear disarmament.

From 16–30 September 2022, SGI and the Center for International Security and Policy co-organized a showing of the “Everything You Treasure” exhibition in Astana, Kazakhstan. Deputy Director of the Department for International Security of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Arman Baisuanov delivered welcoming remarks at the opening

ceremony, stressing the timeliness and importance of raising awareness on nuclear weapons. Another speaker, Bolatbek Baltabek, was a second generation victim of nuclear testing who lives in the village of Sarzhal near the Semipalatinsk Test Site. He shared that people in the area continue to suffer despite the test site’s closure 30 years ago—a fact that reinforced the importance of continued nuclear disarmament work.

Sustainability & Climate Change

BRAZIL & TOGO

Reforestation in Amazon and Togo

In 2022, the *Soka Amazon Institute* on the outskirts of Manaus, Brazil, continued to develop its “Life Memorial” project, where trees are planted in honor of each Brazilian victim of COVID-19, in cooperation with other organizations. In April 2022, eight campuses of the Federal University of Rondônia planted trees as part of this project. Overall, more than 150,000 trees will be planted over a four-year period in the Amazon region.

In February 2022, the *Soka Amazon Institute* joined the *Amazonas Hub of the UN Global Compact*, a network of companies advancing the SDGs. In this capacity, the Institute cooperates with businesses and other institutions to promote sustainable development in Amazonas State.

Also in 2022, the Soka Amazon Institute co-sponsored seminars on digitization and sustainability, on how the Amazon rainforest regulates the global climate and creating paths to water security in the Amazon. The latter was the topic of the seventh Seminar on the Waters of the Amazon.

In Togo, West Africa, a women’s forestry program, supported by the Soka Gakkai in Japan and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), has been underway since September 2020. The *program* aims to restore forest landscape and improve the living standards of local women and their families in order to promote

gender equality and help tackle the climate crisis. Agroforestry is also promoted, whereby the women plant a mixture of trees and commodity crops.

The main implementing partner in this project is the African Women’s Network for Community Management of Forests (REFACOF), which has a record of empowering women and reforestation in 20 countries in Africa. REFACOF has provided women living in marginalized areas in the prefectures of Lacs and Blitta with skills in seedling production and forest management according to local needs. Training sessions include exchanges of experience among the participants. By the end of 2022, more than 150 women had received training and restored more than 35 hectares of forest, producing a total of 48,000 seedlings.



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Women’s forestry program in Togo, West Africa

BONN, GERMANY & SHARM EL-SHEIK, EGYPT

SGI Participates in Bonn Climate Change Conference and COP27

From 6–16 June 2022, Alexandra Goossens-Ishii of SGI attended the *fifty-sixth meeting of the Subsidiary Bodies (SB56) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change*. As part of the Working Group on Human Rights and Climate Change, as well as ECOS (Education, Communication and Outreach Stakeholders Community), she followed issues relating to public participation and Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE), and advocated to include activities that promote rights-based implementation of the Paris Agreement to the ACE Action Plan adopted at COP27. Goossens-Ishii was invited to speak and to facilitate two side events

related to ACE. As part of a group of faith-based organizations, including Bread for the World, The Lutheran World Federation, ACT Alliance and Brahma Kumaris, she co-organized and facilitated a side event on the Global Goal on Adaptation that highlighted perspectives from vulnerable communities.

From 6–19 November 2022, SGI representatives participated in the twenty-seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP27) of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. At COP27, SGI promoted human rights, youth participation, youth empowerment

and reforestation, while also amplifying faith leaders' calls for climate justice.

As part of the *Interfaith Liaison Committee (ILC)*, SGI co-organized an *informal interfaith gathering in the spirit of Talanoa Dialogue* on the first day of COP27, bringing together over 100 participants. This event led to a *Talanoa Dialogue Call*, which ILC representatives, including SGI, presented to Ovais Sarmad, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Deputy Executive Secretary.

Lucy Plummer of SGI-UK led a *side event* on 15 November co-organized with the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA) that modeled genuine participation and showcased the voices of faith-based youth. These young activists, most from the Global South, are speaking out about climate-related suffering and leading action by faith groups. David N. Munene of CYNESA stressed that young people of faith can contribute most when they act in solidarity with others, and other participants emphasized that the world needs the youth's idealism and positive vision.

Additionally, while at COP27, SGI engaged in dialogues that bridged climate and biodiversity issues ahead of the Biodiversity COP15 meeting. Together with the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and the Korea Forest Service, SGI cosponsored a workshop on *REDD+*, a UN framework that aims to reduce



The side event on “Global Interfaith Youth Action on Climate Change: Gather, Discuss, Empower and Act”

emissions caused by deforestation. Cécile Ndjebet of REFACOF, the local partner in a joint Soka Gakkai and ITTO project that supports reforestation efforts by rural women in Togo, spoke at the workshop and highlighted the crucial role that women are playing in African conservation efforts at the grassroots level.

On 14 November 2022, Nobuyuki Asai, Executive Director of the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee, *joined a panel at the Japan Pavilion* on the need to accelerate action toward net zero. Members of the Japan Climate Initiative (JCI), a coalition of Japanese non-state actors, shared their efforts to achieve the 1.5°C target and emphasized the importance of climate justice.

Examining COP27's negotiations from a human rights and climate justice perspective, Goossens-Ishii



Participants at COP27 celebrate the adoption of the new Action Plan after ACE negotiations closed

commented that, while much work remains to be done to center the root causes of climate change and genuinely engage on a just transition from fossil fuels, it was encouraging to see the establishment of a Loss and Damage Fund. This newly created fund incorporates the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment in the COP Decision, and integrates human rights into the newly adopted Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) Action Plan.



Nobuyuki Asai of SGI (right) speaking at the event organized by the JCI

LONDON, UK

Workshop on Youth Participation and Climate Advocacy Held at UK Local Conference of Youth in Advance of COP27 in Egypt

Lucy Plummer of SGI-UK led a workshop on youth participation and communication skills related to climate action at the UK's Local Conference of Youth (LCOY UK 2022), which was held at the University of Manchester on 22 October 2022.

Local Conferences of Youth (LCOYs) aim to give young people a voice in the global response to climate change. The LCOY UK 2022 was entirely planned and organized by young people, and keynote speeches were delivered by two youth activists, Mahnoor Kamran, an 18-year-old Pakistani climate justice advocate, and Jodie Bailey-Ho, an 18-year-old climate campaigner from Essex.

Plummer based the workshop on her research into young people's experiences at the COPs as well as her personal experience as a young participant at COP26. Approximately 25 young people joined the workshop, including activists from across the UK and other countries, where they role-played situations that happened at an intergenerational roundtable discussion at COP26. Several other workshops were held on topics such as why the climate crisis is a justice-based issue, transforming eco-anxiety into eco-action, how climate change and health intersect, nature-based solutions, why biodiversity is so important and fast fashion.

JAPAN

Soka Gakkai Newspaper in Japan Joins First Country-Level UN Climate Action Campaign

On 17 June 2022, the Soka Gakkai's newspaper in Japan, the Seikyo Shimbun, joined 107 other Japanese media companies and the United Nations Information Centre, Tokyo, to launch "Promise of 1.5°C. Act now to stop global warming," the first country-led campaign by members of the UN SDG Media Compact. Media outlets involved in this campaign have committed to promoting action that will help limit the global temperature rise to 1.5°C and encourage individuals and organizations to adopt more sustainable and environmentally conscious practices.

Since the campaign's launch, the Seikyo Shimbun, with a daily circulation of 5.5 million, has published a variety of articles to

raise awareness about climate change. The 5 July 2022 issue featured a Soka Gakkai member who launched a business that produces biodiesel fuel from waste oil and helped set up a non-profit organization to tackle marine litter in western Japan's Tsushima Island. The 10 August 2022 issue published an interview with Massimo Bottura, chef and owner of three-star Michelin restaurant Osteria Francescana in Modena, Italy. Bottura introduced his organization "Food for Soul," which tackles food waste and poverty by running cafeterias that use surplus ingredients to cook nutritious meals and serve them to socioeconomically vulnerable people.



The 5 July 2022 SDGs article about tackling marine litter



Alexandra Goossens-Ishii of SGI (right) speaking on a panel discussion organized by the Parliament of the World Religions on Human Rights and the Rights of Nature

MONTREAL, CANADA

SGI Advocates for a Strong Global Biodiversity Framework at COP15

From 3–19 December 2022, SGI participated in the final round of negotiations of the fifth Open-ended Working Group and the fifteenth Conference of the Parties (COP15) of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which gathered in Montreal, Canada. COP15 adopted the historic *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)*.

After four years of intense negotiations, the Chinese presidency of COP15 succeeded in bridging often disparate positions in the Kunming-Montreal GBF, setting

a goal to live in harmony with nature by 2050. To do so, nations adopted four goals and 23 targets under the GBF to complete by 2030 in order to “take urgent action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss to put nature on a path to recovery for the benefit of people and planet...”

SGI advocated for the GBF to follow a human rights-based approach, including by recognizing Indigenous Peoples’ rights over their lands and territories, the right to access justice and the protection of environmental human rights

defenders. From an interfaith perspective, SGI joined the *Faiths at COP15* coalition, which gathered faith groups spanning almost every major faith tradition. For the first time in the context of a Biodiversity COP, faith communities were able to have their voices and *policy recommendations* heard by UN Convention on Biological Diversity Executive Secretary Elizabeth Mrema and many negotiators. Alexandra Goossens-Ishii of SGI supported the policy engagement of the Faiths at COP15 coalition and contributed to several side events.



Artwork created by youth from the Global Youth Biodiversity Network

INDIA

Extensive Efforts from BSG to Promote the SDGs in India

In July 2021, the Soka Gakkai organization in India known as Bharat Soka Gakkai (BSG) introduced its BSG for SDG campaign to advocate for and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the banner “Towards 2030: Achieving SDGs Through Sustainable Human Behavior.”

Since early 2021, BSG has toured a virtual exhibition titled “*Seeds of Hope and Action: Making the SDGs a Reality*” to various schools and colleges in India. The exhibition aims to reach young people to raise their awareness about sustainability, encourage them to overcome feelings of powerlessness and highlight the fact that individuals can initiate positive change.

Since the start of 2022, BSG has been working to formally launch SDG Clubs at educational institutes, which raise SDG leaders among youth. Students in SDG Clubs are encouraged to meet monthly to discuss various aspects of sustainability and share innovative actions that they can implement in their daily lives. BSG provides them with materials on the SDGs.

In various forums, BSG members share stories and ideas during what is referred to as “SDG Time.”

Coordinating the efforts of BSG members toward achieving the SDGs are SDG Ambassadors. They consist of around 300 individuals who help spread SDG awareness and serve as primary contacts for any questions regarding the SDGs.

Monthly SDG meetings are hosted by BSG at the national level to share members' experiences of promoting the SDGs in their communities and workplaces, and to hold panel discussions on applying the SDGs in daily life together with experts in various fields.

BSG's bimonthly online newsletter *Sustainable* examines a specific theme in each of the 17 SDG goals. It focuses on spreading awareness using the "learn, reflect, empower" formula outlined in *SGI's Education for Sustainable Development Proposal* authored by Daisaku Ikeda, the president of SGI. The "Learn" section of the newsletter introduces the various SDGs in an easy-to-grasp manner. The "Reflect" section focuses on studying the SGI's peace proposals and self-reflection on

how to personally contribute to actualizing the SDGs. Lastly, the "Empower" section shares BSG members' stories on contributing to implementing the SDGs. Articles on each of the 17 goals are also featured in BSG's monthly organizational publication *Value Creation*, with a readership of nearly 50,000.

Digital tools such as short educational videos on the SDGs are available on the BSG [YouTube](#) channel and social media pages. In August 2022, BSG launched the "BSG for SDG" mobile app and [website](#).

BSG's work has earned some recognitions, including the Mahatma Award for Social Good and Impact and the Sustainability Innovation Award 2022 from the Bharathidasan Institute of Management.

BANGKOK, THAILAND & ONLINE

SGI Participates in the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

From 28–31 March 2022, SGI participated in the 9th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), which served as a regional meeting to prepare for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) held in July 2022. The Asia Pacific Faith-Based Coalition for Sustainable Development (APFC), which brings together ACT Alliance, Arigatou International, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Soka Gakkai International and World Vision International, has participated in APFSD since its official launch in 2018.

APFC organized an official virtual side event to APFSD that took place on 30 March. "Building Back Better in the Time of Covid-19: Interventions from Faith Actors" showcased the work of faith actors in achieving the SDGs. Alwynn Javier of ACT Alliance, the current APFC Convenor, gave an overview of faith actors implementing the SDGs, followed by the representatives of Envisions Institute of Development (EID) and EcoSikh presenting their projects and findings.

Rudrajit Das, Communication for Development Chief at UNICEF Nepal, shared his experience working with faith-based partners and emphasized the importance of their roles and contributions. In closing, Hiro Sakurai of SGI, a former convenor of APFC, noted

APFC's commitment to facilitating further collaboration among faith actors and with other partners on shared goals.

From 19–21 March 2022, over 600 people under age 30 attended the APFSD Youth Forum, which was held online and in person in Bangkok, Thailand. Participants, including SGI youth representatives, were from over 33 countries across Asia and the Pacific region.

Each day of the three-day forum concluded with a dialogue session between participants in country and sub-regional groups. Harumi Endo of SGI and Munkh-Erdene Davaajav of YouthLEAD Mongolia co-moderated the discussion in the East, Northeast Asia and Central Asia subregional group where approximately 25 young people from China, including the Hong Kong and Macau Special Administrative Regions, Japan, Georgia, Mongolia and Tajikistan discussed challenges that they and their peers face, such as mental health issues and lack of access to quality education, and they proposed recommendations for better solutions.

Issues and recommendations voiced throughout the event were compiled into a comprehensive document, "[APFSD Youth Call to Action 2022](#)," which youth delegates presented at the APFSD and ECOSOC Youth Forum. The Youth Call to Action was also presented at HLPF in July.



BSG

"Seeds of Hope & Action" exhibition held at a public school in New Delhi

Human Rights Education

NANTES, FRANCE

Human Rights Exhibitions and Symposium Held in France

From 3–11 December 2022, Amnesty International and the Soka Cultural Association of France worked together to show two exhibitions on human rights at the Espace Beaulieu in Nantes, France.

The first, “*Transforming Lives: The Power of Human Rights Education*,” is a traveling exhibition created in 2017 by SGI, the NGO WG on HREL and HRE2020, with the support of OHCHR. It illustrates the vital role of human rights education in promoting dignity, equality and peace. The exhibition was first shown in France in 2019 at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

The second exhibition, “*Just Humans*,” was created by Magnum Photos and Amnesty International. Together they joined forces to look back on 60 years of mobilization for human rights, through a selection of images that illustrate the diversity of actions carried out by Amnesty throughout that time.

In addition, a symposium of four

roundtable discussions entitled “Human Rights – for, with and by youth” was held on 3 December 2022. The first discussion explored the role of human rights education, particularly aimed at making young people aware of their rights. The second discussion examined ways different aspects of society, such as the economy, culture and sport, can serve the needs of human beings. The third discussed action needed against disinformation and toxic speech. The fourth roundtable explored how building self-esteem can contribute to a change in our environment.

Representing SGI and the NGO WG on HREL, Elisa Gazzotti spoke at the first roundtable on the importance of human rights education for, with and by youth. She also pointed to the essential role that civil society plays in driving momentum for UN initiatives, particularly the fourth phase of the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education, which is focused on youth.



ONLINE

Webinar Series Promotes Human Rights Education through the Stories of Youth

In 2022, SGI, OHCHR and Amnesty International convened the second through seventh editions of the conversation series, “Human Rights Education for, with and by youth: A conversation with young people around the world.” These conversations featured young human rights educators from various parts of the world, each session featuring a video of their story, followed by a conversation with the youth. Topics covered in the series in 2022 included promoting gender equality, standing up for girls’ rights, rethinking masculinity, engaging children and youth as change makers, and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities.

One of the webinars was convened on 17 August, titled “Fighting

Human Trafficking Through Human Rights Education.” The event was moderated by Flore Ghetti, who represents SGI on the Youth Advisory Board for the joint project. Ghetti introduced the topic of the webinar by saying, “Human trafficking, also called trafficking in persons, has no place in our world. ... With an estimated 24.9 million victims worldwide at any given time, human traffickers prey on adults and children of all ages, backgrounds and nationalities, exploiting them for their own profit. This is where the role of human rights education prevails.”

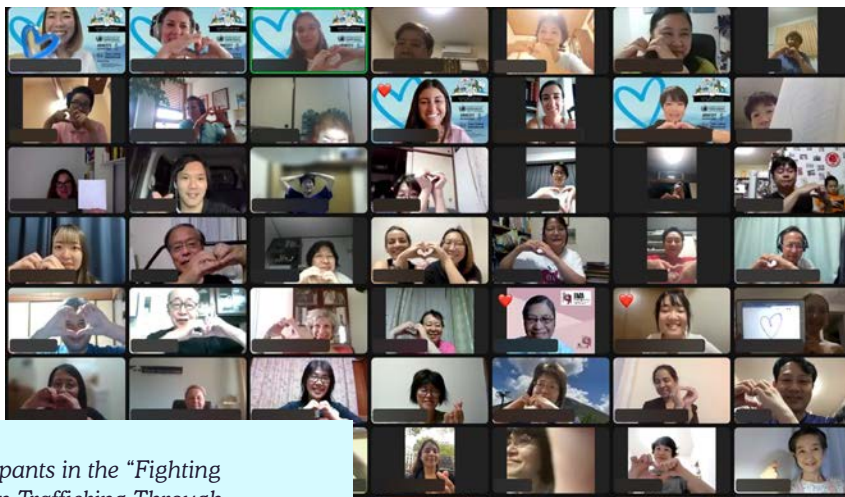
Aiki Matsukura, a young Japanese human rights educator, joined the event for a video screening showing her advocacy work. Matsukura



Aiki Matsukura, trafficking expert and speaker in the 17 August webinar

worked for nearly eight years for an organization working to support the victims of sex trafficking in Japan. After the video, she noted that some in the audience might be surprised to hear that human trafficking is a serious issue in Japan, as it is considered one of the world’s safest countries. However, Matsukura pointed out, Japan is known in the international community to be notorious for human trafficking, which she attributes to the country’s large sex industry, as well as contributing socio-cultural factors such as the lack of sex education, commodification of young girls and legal loopholes.

Matsukura went on to share her inspiring journey in fighting human trafficking through human rights education. She shared powerful accounts of how outreach and education has helped victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation to realize that they have total autonomy over their bodies. “It is only through learning the importance of and having the experience of being respected that one can respect others’ rights. Human rights education with a focus on sex education raises the sense of self-esteem of individuals,” Matsukura said.



Participants in the “Fighting Human Trafficking Through Human Rights Education” webinar

TURIN, ITALY

Forum Addresses Young People, Human Rights Education and Citizenship in Europe

A conference took place in Turin, Italy, from 11–13 April 2022 titled, *“The Art of Learning, Equality, Dignity, Democracy: Forum on the present and future of citizenship and human rights education in Europe with young people.”* The Council of Europe Education and Youth sectors, the Italian Department for Youth Policy and the Universal Civic Service co-organized the event, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Amnesty International, the City of Turin, the National Youth Council of Italy and the European Youth Forum.

Elisa Gazzotti, SGI representative and Chair of the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning (NGO WG on HREL), participated in the conference, which drew about 300 human rights educators, advocates, and representatives of civil society, governments and international organizations.

Participants highlighted the importance of “retelling the story of human rights in ways that are important to the local context” and looking “for people [who] are invisible in our work, and [to] teach and learn about the rights of the people.” A young Italian participant shared, “Institutions listen to us— young people—only when we act with anger. But we should always be listened to.”

As part of the conference, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) organized a workshop on 12 April titled “Good Practices in Human Rights Education: Global and National Perspectives.” Gazzotti was invited to present the work of the NGO WG on HREL during this workshop, where she shared about the group’s purpose, as well as its past activities around advocacy on human rights education for young people at the UN Human Rights Council. Paulina Tandiono of OHCHR also presented, sharing the “Stories of Young Human Rights Educators,” a multilingual, multimedia educational tool jointly developed by SGI, Amnesty International and OHCHR.



Elisa Gazzotti of SGI presenting at the 12 April workshop



ONLINE

Human Rights Day Event Discusses “Transforming Education Through Human Rights”

On 8 December 2022, as part of the celebration for Human Rights Day, UNESCO, OHCHR and the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth co-organized an online event, titled “Transforming Education Through Human Rights,” in partnership with Amnesty International and SGI. The event aimed to enhance dialogue among young people and policymakers on how human rights education for youth can be used to implement the *Youth Declaration on Transforming Education* launched during the Transforming Education Summit 2022, as well as on the parameters of the evolving right to education.

Attended by more than 180 people, the event was opened by OHCHR’s Deputy High Commissioner Nada

Al-Nashif, UNESCO’s Assistant Director-General for Education Stefania Giannini, the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth Jayathma Wickramanayake, and Ronelle King, a Young Leader for the SDGs. Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education Farida Shaheed participated in an interactive dialogue to frame the issue. Subsequently, participants joined three parallel sessions that delved deeper into three different themes. Flore Ghetti, who represents SGI on the Youth Advisory Board for the joint human rights education project with OHCHR and Amnesty International, co-facilitated a parallel session titled “Human Rights Education and Youth Declaration.”

Peace

UN OFFICE AT GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Advocacy at the Fifty-First Session of the *Human Rights Council*

During the fifty-first session of the Human Rights Council (HRC), Elisa Gazzotti of SGI undertook several activities as Chair of the NGO WG on HREL. Gazzotti participated in a meeting with the newly appointed Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Farida Shaheed; moderated a side event on youth and human rights education (HRE); met the Member States of the Platform on Human Rights Education and Training (Brazil, Costa Rica, Italy, Morocco, the Philippines, Senegal, Slovenia and Thailand); and participated in informal meetings on drafting the Resolution.

On 21 September 2022, Gazzotti delivered an *oral statement* on behalf of the NGO WG on HREL, which advocated for better implementation of HRE with, for and by young people.

Gazzotti also moderated a side event on 22 September 2022, titled “Fourth Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education: Looking at the next two years: Gaps & Achievements.” The hybrid event included a panel discussion organized by the members of the Platform on Human Rights Education and Training and the NGO WG on HREL, with the support of OHCHR.

Ambassador Shara Duncan, Deputy Representative of the UN Mission of Costa Rica, gave opening remarks before a youth-led panel. Paulina Tandiono, OHCHR Associate Human Rights Officer, shared some of the key points from the midterm report presented at the fifty-first session of the HRC. Hamdi Addow, Associate Program Specialist, UNESCO, then discussed the Future of Education Initiative Report from an HRE perspective.

After the UN perspective, three other young human rights educators and advocates shared their work: Jean Linis-Dinco, leading a team from the Philippines; Irfaan Mangera, subject of the film “Young People Engaging in Human Rights Education: A Story from South Africa;” and Lais Caputo of the Instituto de Desenvolvimento em Direitos Humanos (IDDH) in Brazil. Closing remarks were made by Ambassador Anita Pipan, Permanent Representative of Slovenia.



Irfaan Mangera (on screen), shares about his work in South Africa at the 22 September side event



JORDAN

Soka Gakkai and Musicians Without Borders' Joint Program in Jordan Completes Its Second Year

Supported by Soka Gakkai and run by Musicians Without Borders, the Al-Musiqa Tajm'ana: "Music Brings Us Together" program in Jordan has successfully completed its second year with the support of Caritas Jordan as the primary local partner. This three-year program, launched in January 2021, aims to create a network of musicians, social workers and teachers who are equipped with the skills to use music as a tool for strengthening social inclusion, stimulating creative development and bringing hope and joy to children in underserved refugee and host communities.

Fabienne van Eck, Regional Program Manager for the Middle East for Musicians Without Borders (MWB), and Jordanian musician Tareq Jundi lead the programs.

In the first year, the project gathered musicians, recently

graduated music students, music teachers and youth workers to take part in three training cycles, each accommodated to the groups' specific needs. Training focused on trauma awareness, self-care and non-violent communication, aiming to contribute to alleviating stress among children and strengthening their ability to overcome difficulties. It focused on didactic, pedagogical and leadership skills; group work with vulnerable children; teamwork; and conflict resolution. Musicians and community leaders gained tools and techniques to create spaces of safety, connection and creativity.

Each trainee then implemented several sessions with children or other vulnerable groups, such as women in a shelter for victims of violence. Jundi noted how impressed he was that the program's training fully focused on meeting the needs of the children, rather than on technical skill. "One aspect was how to make the child improvise from day one, to feel that he is in a safe environment and to start to improvise and to express."

In its second year, the project organized three cycles of Music Leadership Training and one cycle of Music as Therapy training in Amman with 39 trainees. Participants in the Music as Therapy training, which was implemented in cooperation with Music as Therapy International, a nonprofit based in the United

Kingdom, developed their skills to work with children with special needs.

In both training courses, trainees had opportunities for practical application: the trainees from the Music Leadership Training gave 145 music workshops attended by 598 children with diverse backgrounds and 64 music students; those trained in Music as Therapy gave 48 sessions attended by 25 young children with special needs. By including trainees from various areas, the program was able to reach more children in areas with little access to music education.



Children participating in the "Music Brings Us Together" program



Children participating in the "Music Brings Us Together" program

ONLINE

SGI and Ikeda Center Host Panel Discussion Commemorating Fortieth SGI Peace Proposal

Since 1983, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda has authored peace proposals that integrate philosophical reflections with concrete, civic-oriented action steps to point a way forward for those seeking to create the global culture of peace. To celebrate the 2022 publication of the fortieth proposal, SGI hosted an online panel discussion in collaboration with the Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning and Dialogue, which was held on UN Day, 24 October 2022. Titled "The Peace Proposals at 40: Creating Vibrant Hope and Advancing the Culture of Peace," the webinar was attended by nearly 400 people representing 36 countries.

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

Peace Symposium Held in Aotearoa, New Zealand

On 6 August 2022, SGI New Zealand (SGINZ) and Te Ao o te Rongomaraeroa, the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (NCPCS) at the University of Otago, co-hosted a *Peace Symposium* at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) on the theme of “Envisioning Peace in a Time of Uncertainty.”

The first panel discussion was chaired by Dr. Andrew Codling, Former Head of the Vice Chancellor’s Office of AUT and featured three young peace activists: Haris Murtaza, Co-Chair of the National Islamic Youth Association, Ashlyn Baines, Youth Programmes Coordinator of The Peace Foundation and Julia Guthrey, Youth Representative of SGINZ. Agreeing that grassroots activities for peace affect the world at large, Guthrey stated that mutual understanding and support are important in times of uncertainty,

drawing on themes from the 2022 SGI *peace proposal*.

Following this panel, Kevin Clements, Founding Director of the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies and Director of the Toda Peace Institute, gave a lecture on “Post-Ukraine Challenges to the Future of Nuclear Disarmament,” which was followed by a Q&A session. Chaired by Dr. Jenny Te-Paa Daniel, Interim Director of NCPCS, the second panel discussion focused more specifically on peace in New Zealand and the Pacific region. Panelists were Professor Malakai Koloamatangi of the Ministry for Pacific Peoples; Anahera Gildea (Ngāti Tukorehe), SGINZ member and PhD Candidate in the International Institute of Modern Letters at Te Herenga Waka (Victoria University of Wellington); and Dr. SungYong Lee of NCPCS.



Youth panelists speak on “Envisioning Peace in a Time of Uncertainty”



SGI participates in the Bahrain Dialogue Forum

MANAMA, BAHRAIN

Bahrain Dialogue Forum Brings Together Diverse Faith Perspectives

From 3–4 November 2022, the Bahrain Dialogue Forum titled “East and West for Human Coexistence” hosted more than 700 participants, including religious leaders from around the world, to exchange views on global issues. The forum was co-organized by the Muslim Council of Elders, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in the Kingdom of Bahrain and the King Hamad Global Centre for Peaceful Coexistence and held at the Isa Cultural Center and the Al-Sakhir Palace in Bahrain.

At the inaugural forum, Sheikh bin Muhammad Al Khalifa, Chairman of the Supreme Council for Islamic

Affairs, introduced Bahrain’s initiatives toward peace and coexistence, including the release of “*The Kingdom of Bahrain Declaration on Religious Tolerance*” in 2017.

Three sessions were held, titled “Experiences of Promoting Global Coexistence and Human Fraternity,” “Peaceful Coexistence” and “The Role of Religious Leaders and Scholars in Addressing Contemporary Challenges: Climate Change and Global Food Crisis,” respectively. During the third session, Hirotugu Terasaki, Vice President of Soka Gakkai, shared Buddhist perspectives on emerging

crises, emphasizing the Buddhist concepts of compassion and interdependence. He also stressed that humankind ought to do all it can to return the blessings of interconnectedness and support that it receives from all things by caring for other creatures as kindly as possible. Furthermore, Terasaki shared his conviction that Soka Gakkai and SGI's activities and exhibitions transmit hope in spite of a general atmosphere

of powerlessness caused by the complexity and scale of the problems we face today.

At the closing ceremony, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain, His Eminence Sheikh Ahmed El-Tayeb the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and His Holiness Pope Francis spoke, demonstrating the spirit of religious co-existence.

around the world. Young people, as Wickramanayake stated, are saying, "There is no peace without equality and justice, and no justice and equality without peace."

A panel discussion in the Trusteeship Council Chamber followed and included representatives from permanent missions, UN agencies and civil society. The panel's chair and moderator was Ambassador

Anwarul K. Chowdhury, founder of the GMCoP, former Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of the United Nations and Chair of the UN General Assembly negotiations for the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (1998–1999).

UN HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK, USA

Eleventh UN High-Level Forum on the Culture of Peace



Movement for the Culture of Peace (GMCoP). As a founding member of GMCoP, SGI has helped organize these Forums for over 10 years.

Held in the General Assembly Hall, the Opening Remarks and Plenary Segment included some 50 statements from Member States, Observers and UN entities. The 2022 theme was "The Culture of Peace: Importance of justice, equality and inclusion for advancing peacebuilding." In his statement, Secretary-General António Guterres mentioned the New Agenda for Peace proposed in his "Our Common Agenda" report, which would better link peace, security and human rights. Other speakers included Elizabeth Spehar, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, and Jayathma Wickramanayake, the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, who called on members of the audience to listen to young people

SGI helped organize the High-Level Forum on the Culture of Peace

On 6 September 2022, the High-Level Forum on the Culture of Peace was convened in person for the first time in three years by the President of the General Assembly, in cooperation with the Global

ASTANA, KAZAKHSTAN

Soka Gakkai Joins World Interfaith Congress

From 14–15 September 2022, Soka Gakkai Vice President Hirotsugu Terasaki participated in the seventh Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Astana, Kazakhstan. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of Kazakhstan gave welcoming remarks, followed by His Holiness Pope Francis; Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Sheikh Ahmed El-Tayeb; Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate; and Yitzhak Yosef, Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel. UN Secretary General H.E. António

Guterres participated virtually, sending his remarks via a video message.

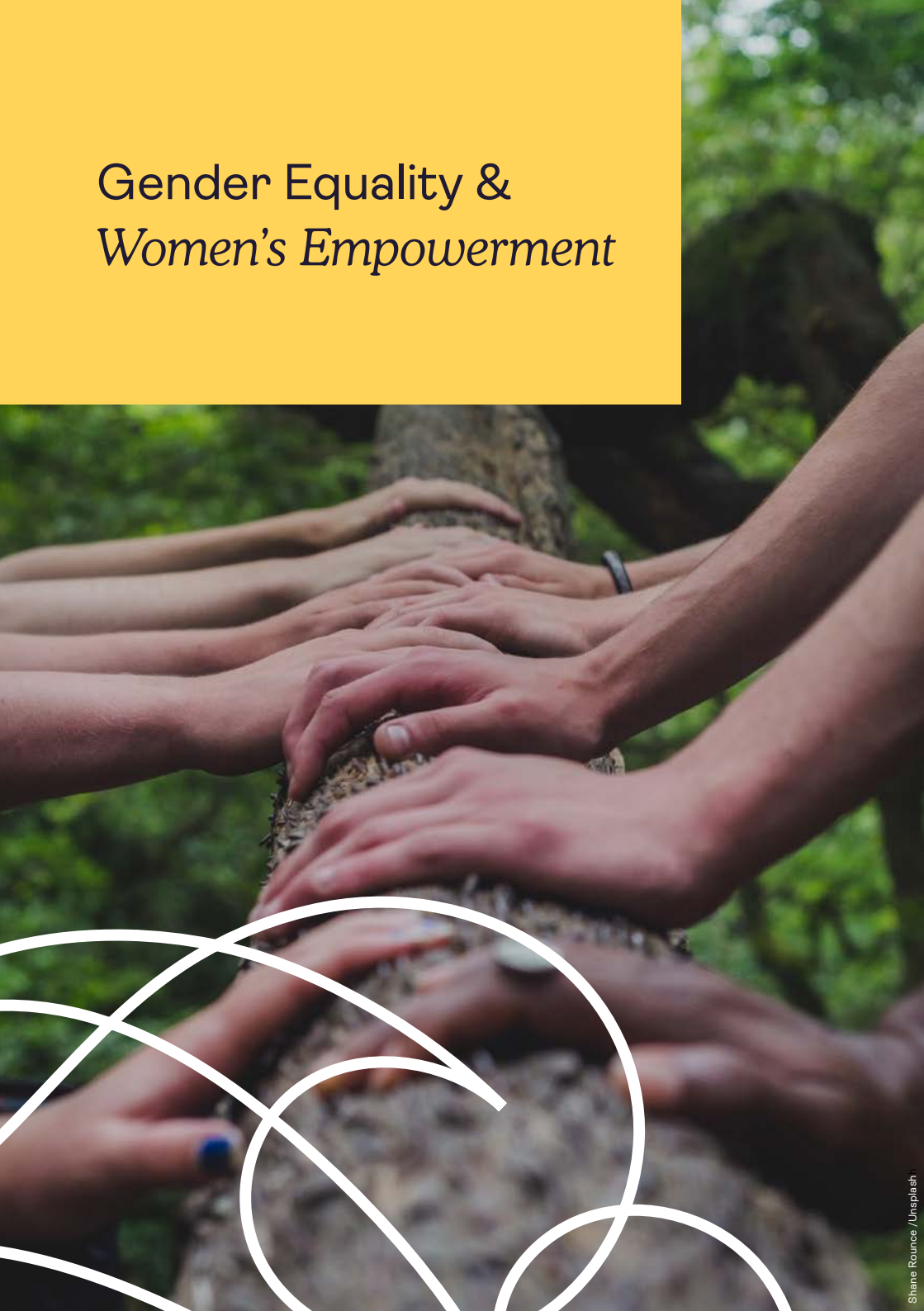
During a plenary session, Terasaki gave a speech based on the 2022 SGI *peace proposal* in which he stressed the need to build a society where all can savor the joy of being alive and stated the Soka Gakkai's determination to contribute to interfaith solidarity. At the closing ceremony, it was announced that the eighth Congress will convene in 2025 again in Kazakhstan's capital, Astana.



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The seventh Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions

Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment



ONLINE

Women's Leadership Event to Tackle Climate Change and Disasters at CSW66

The sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) took place from 14–25 March 2022. The session outcomes included Agreed Conclusions on the priority theme: addressing how reducing the risks from climate change, the environment and disasters impacts gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The session also adopted its new Methods of Work, last reviewed in 2015. As Co-chair of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York (NGO CSW/NY) Advocacy and Research Group, Ivy Koek of SGI spearheaded coordination for an inclusive and open process to gather civil society recommendations for the Methods of Work, which outlines the Commission's work and how its session is organized. The updated Methods of Work included

an interactive youth dialogue, a new addition to its program of work that received broad support from NGOs but was otherwise highly debated during the session.

During CSW66, SGI organized a parallel event on "Women's Leadership to Tackle Climate Change and Disasters." Held on 16 March 2022, the event was co-sponsored by the Disability Rights Fund, the Disabilities Rights Advocacy Fund and the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In her welcome remarks, Koek introduced the work of the Soka Gakkai Women's Peace Committee through a video in which a woman recalled her experience of relocating due to the Tohoku nuclear plant accident. Her resilient spirit to make friends in her new home and her wish to impart hope to others through her dance performances

PANEL SPEAKERS



Dwi Ariyani
Regional Head of Programs-Asia, Disability Rights Fund and Disability Rights Advocacy Fund



Frances Namoumou
Ecological Stewardship & Climate Justice Programme Coordinator, Pacific Conference of Churches



Christine Kandie
Endorois Indigenous Women Empowerment Network (EIWEN), Kenya



Hamira Kobusingye
Gender Reproductive Health and Climate Activist, Uganda



Marcella Ribeiro d'Avila Lins Torres
Human rights lawyer, AIDA Human Rights and the Environment Program, Brazil

was shared as an example of leadership.

Subsequently, Fleur Newman, Action Empowerment Unit Lead for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Yumiko Tanaka, Senior Gender Advisor of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Vice President of the Japan Women's Network for Disaster Risk Reduction offered opening remarks. Newman spoke about how much policies and action around gender and climate have changed in the last 10 years. Tanaka mentioned that the *Sendai Framework* addresses the need to include women and youth leadership in disaster policies and decision-making.

A discussion followed, with four climate and disaster risk reduction experts and activists who offered

their perspectives from their various national contexts, including Fiji, Indonesia, Brazil and Uganda.

The panelists discussed several topics: the power of online climate activism; the importance of incorporating faith and spirituality for people of the Pacific in climate-induced relocation projects; the positive impact of feminist movement collaborations and alliance building; the leadership of women human rights defenders; and working toward a more equitable world by having women in all their diversity in leadership roles. Female and feminist leadership, Newman pointed out, is not gendered: "It is an alternative choice to the existential crisis ... not business as usual," which opens new ways and new solutions to our challenges.

MEXICO, PANAMA & SPAIN

Soka Gakkai of Spain, Panama and Mexico Participate in Local Women's Leadership and Empowerment Events

On 8 March 2022, Inés Vázquez González of Soka Gakkai Spain represented the Buddhist Union of Spain at an interfaith symposium on women, leadership and religion in Madrid. The event was organized by the Foundation for Pluralism and Coexistence to commemorate International Women's Day. Six women who hold positions of leadership in their religious groups reflected on the role of women in their communities and the need to achieve equality between men and women.



© Fundación Pluralismo y Convivencia

The interfaith symposium in Madrid



© Seikiye Shimbun

Soka Gakkai Mexico's 11 March online gathering on women's empowerment

All of the speakers—representing Bahá'í, Buddhist, Evangelical, Episcopal, Islamic, and Jewish perspectives—emphasized the advances made in female leadership in the religious sphere, but ultimately they agreed that religious communities have not yet equally progressed in legitimizing women's voices.

Also on 8 March, SGI Panama members held a webinar on gender equality featuring three speakers. Nair Castillo Infante, an emotional wellness coach, presented on "How to Fall in Love with Yourself," followed by Maria Pia Bazzolo, a human resources specialist, who spoke on "Empowered Women." Lastly, Aldo Cano Grajales of SGI highlighted the role of men in achieving gender equality. Participants agreed that women should have the freedom to choose their roles at home and in society, and that everything starts with inner-motivated change.

On 11 March, Soka Gakkai Mexico (SGMex) hosted an online

gathering on the theme of women's empowerment in a century of humanism. Over 300 women in Mexico and El Salvador joined the event. Based on the SGI peace proposals, the event identified five characteristics of empowered women: they engage in local issues; have a global, ecological and futuristic vision; are effective agents of change; are promoters of human rights; and take responsibility to generate change.

Brenda Elena de la Rosa Díaz, Academic Secretary of the Faculty of Psychology at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, gave a keynote address on the co-responsibility of women in parenting for a culture of peace. In her closing remarks, SGMex women's leader María Eugenia Rojas stressed the need to work together to solve problems, eliminate gender inequality, strengthen youth empowerment and foster respect for diversity to rebuild trust in society.



Participants in the online event “Creating a Culture of Peace — Making a Difference as Peacebuilders in Daily Life.”

AUSTRALIA

SGI Australia Holds Online Event on Women’s Power to Promote Peace

On 26 June 2022, SGI Australia organized an online event titled “Creating a Culture of Peace — Making a Difference as Peacebuilders in Daily Life.” The event drew inspiration from a dialogue conducted through correspondence between SGI President Daisaku Ikeda and professor and peace activist Elise Boulding, which was encapsulated in their book *Into Full Flower — Making Peace Cultures Happen*. Their dialogue stresses the significant roles that women, in particular, play in realizing peace in everyday life and society.

Panelists from SGI-Australia included Vanna Rodda (Victoria),

Kate Clarkson (New South Wales), Francesca Cardoni (Western Australia) and panel facilitator Nupur Sood (New South Wales). Serena Rix Tripathee, an International Committee Member of the women’s peace network *Creators of Peace* was a guest speaker. All shared their visions for peace and the actions they can take in daily life to realize the culture of peace. Highlights included: contributing to society should start at home, valuable lessons from consensus decision-making, establishing peace in the minds of women, and the extraordinary power of women when they find their voices and join together.

JAPAN

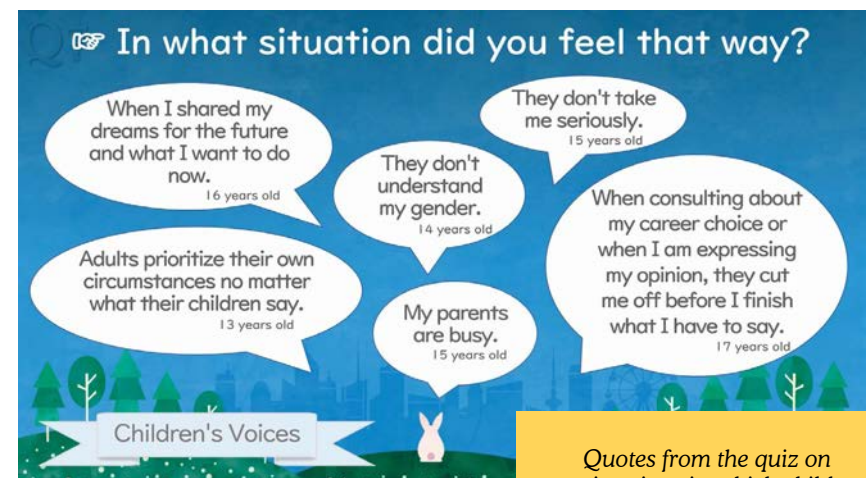
Soka Gakkai Women’s Peace Committee Hosts SDGs Forum on Children’s Happiness

The Soka Gakkai Women’s Peace Committee in Japan has been holding a series of meetings in various locations across Japan since March 2022 titled: “Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Forum: The Way Forward to a Bright Future.” The series aims to inspire people to commit to putting the SDGs into action.

On 15 October 2022, the committee held an online forum focused on SDG 4, “Quality Education.” Takao Ito, Professor at Soka University in Tokyo, gave a lecture on the theme “For the Happiness of Children — Janusz Korczak and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi.” He emphasized that the educational philosophies of Janusz Korczak, a Polish pediatrician and educator, had greatly influenced the process of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which was adopted by the United Nations in 1989 and entered into force in 1990.

It also highlighted the influence of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the founding president of Soka Gakkai, who served as principal of a series of elementary schools in Japan for many years. Korczak and Makiguchi resonated with one another in that they both believed in the potential of all children and strived to treat them with the utmost respect as individuals.

Prior to the event, the Soka Gakkai Women’s Peace Committee conducted an online quiz and survey on the CRC for 2,575 junior and high school students in Japan, ages 12 to 17. The quiz gauged the students’ awareness of children’s rights and asked about their basic understanding of the Convention and their opinions on their own living environments. The *results* were presented during the forum.



Quotes from the quiz on situations in which children feel they are not listened to

ONLINE

High-Level Political Forum Side Event by Multi-Faith Advisory Council to the United Nations Addresses Gender Equality

In 2021, SGI joined the Multi-Faith Advisory Council (MFAC), which was established by the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development (UN-IATF) consisting of over 20 UN agencies. With over 40 religious leaders and heads of faith-based organizations (FBOs), MFAC is an informal and voluntary group that supports the UN-IATF “as a platform for knowledge exchange and management, capacity building, system-wide guidance and oversight regarding engagement with faith-based/-inspired civil society actors.”

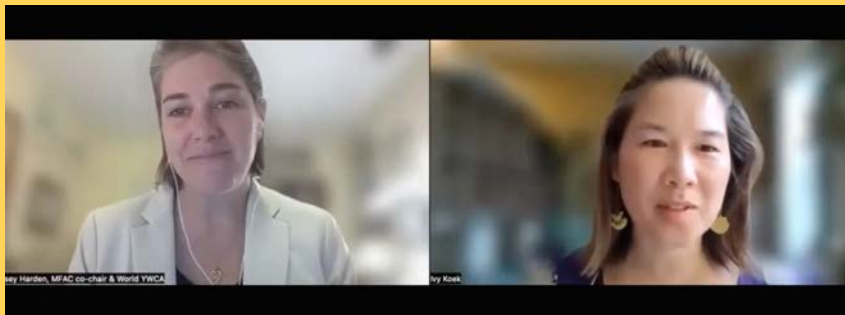
The MFAC, under the lead of its Gender Working Group, organized an *official side event of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)*. The 7 July online event was co-sponsored by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN Alliance of Civilizations and the UN Office of Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. “Dispelling

Misconceptions and Myths: Faith Actors Advancing Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls” addressed three of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under review at the 2022 HLPF: gender equality, partnerships for the goals and quality education.

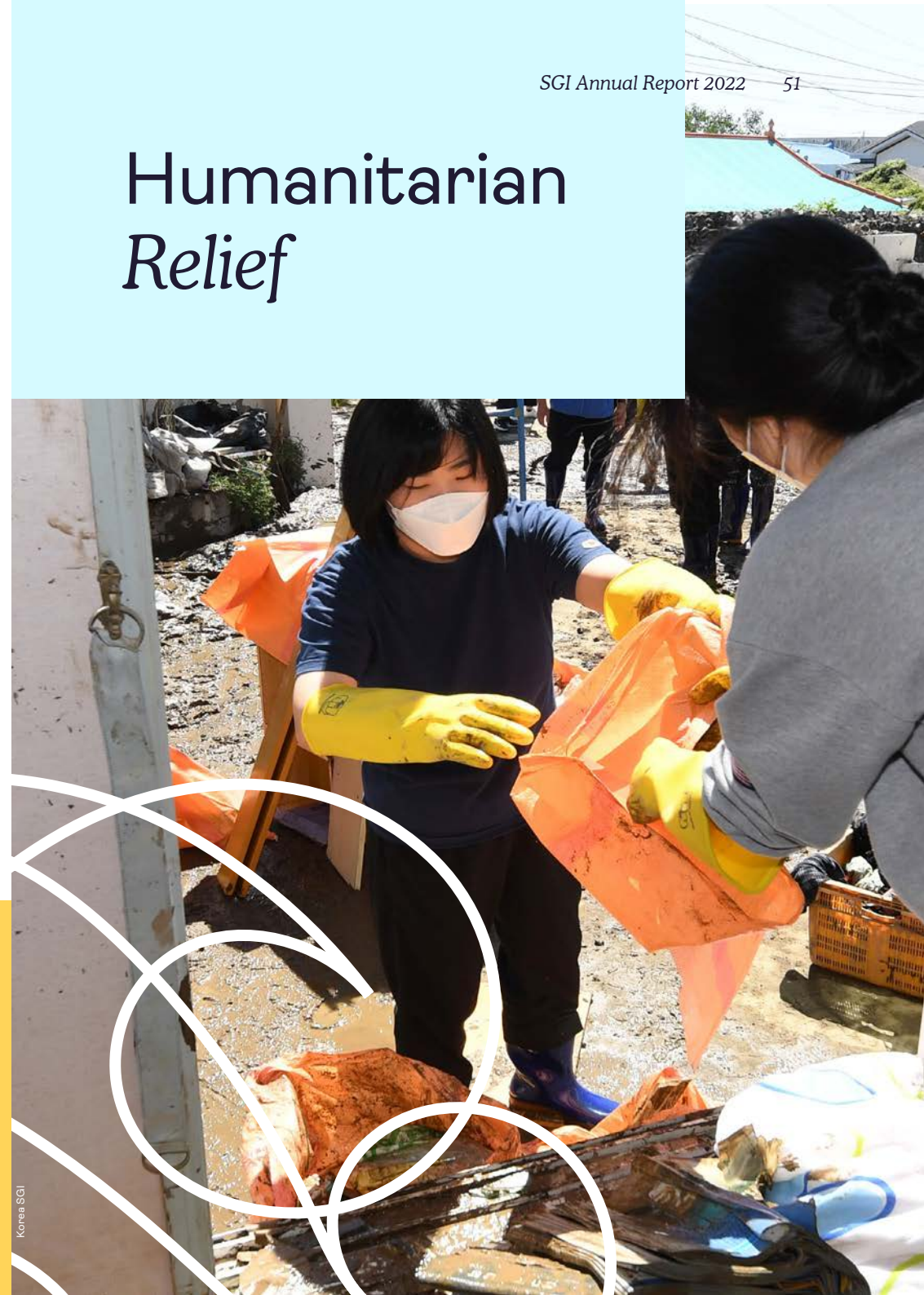
Casey Harden, General Secretary of World YWCA, opened the event, saying, “Religious language rooted in human rights framing has historically proven to be a source of non-violent transformation in the defense of human rights, equality, integrity in government and reconciliation and stability in divided societies.”

Following Harden’s introduction, Ivy Koek of SGI hosted a panel discussion. Panelists presented various examples to counter the widespread assumption that faith actors perpetuate gender inequality, demonstrating that they are, in fact, striving to accomplish the opposite.

Humanitarian Relief



Casey Harden of YWCA and Ivy Koek of SGI (right), during the side event on faith actors advancing gender equality



POHANG, SOUTH KOREA

Humanitarian Assistance to South Korea in Response to Typhoon Hinnamnor



Korea SGI

In late August 2022, Typhoon Hinnamnor left a trail of destruction caused by heavy rains and related flooding when it hit Pohang City in North Gyeongsang Province, South Korea. Korea SGI (KSGI) supported victims through financial and humanitarian assistance.

From 6–8 September, 100 KSGI leaders and 73 youth members from Daegu and Pohang visited Pohang City to support those affected. While engaging in relief activities, the volunteers also provided emotional support to local KSGI members who had been affected by the typhoon.

On 21 October, KSGI also donated funds to the Pohang City Council to support the earliest possible recovery of the disaster-hit areas.

Prior to the typhoon’s landfall, record rainfall had struck Seoul and the surrounding areas. On 8 August, 65 KSGI members from Gwanak-gu, Dongjak-gu and Yeongdeungpo-gu helped clean damaged houses and visited those affected by flooding to offer support.

and regional levels to take stock of the Sendai Framework’s implementation. Governments agreed to build and improve national disaster risk reduction strategies and strengthen synergy between disaster-related issues and climate change adaptation efforts.

At the Ignite Stage, a space for stakeholders to present, Nobuyuki Asai of SGI presented “Pursuing social connections to leave no one behind: the perspective of a faith-based organization in a time of social distancing” on 25 May. He highlighted the robust grassroots network the Soka Gakkai has built through daily faith activities and described its positive functions during the crisis of isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Asai also introduced research findings from the Joint Learning Initiative on

Faith & Local Communities regarding responses to COVID-19, which state that faith leaders are considered a reliable source of information by community members and, in some areas, contributed to preventing the spread of misinformation during the pandemic.

In addition to Asai’s presentation, SGI joined a group of faith-based organizations (FBOs), including ACT Alliance, Tearfund and local faith organizations, to submit a joint statement to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). The statement, signed by more than 30 FBOs, encourages decision makers to “use the capacity of FBOs and local faith communities to communicate with communities, building on the trust communities have in their faith leaders.”

BALI, INDONESIA

Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction Held in Bali

The seventh session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR) was held in Bali, Indonesia, from 25–27 May 2022, with the theme “From Risk to Resilience: Toward Sustainable Development

for All in a COVID-19 Transformed World.”

The session examined the experiences of practitioners and policymakers at local, national



Nobuyuki Asai of SGI presenting at the Ignite Stage

SENDAI, JAPAN

Panel Session on Role of Partnerships in Disaster Resilience Presented at Sendai Bosai Mirai Forum

On 5 March, 2022, the Soka Gakkai Student Division in Tohoku participated in the 8th Sendai Bosai (“disaster risk reduction”) Mirai Forum held in Sendai City, Miyagi, which was severely devastated by the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011.

The forum was first held in March 2016, on the first anniversary of the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) held in Sendai in 2015. It aims to share the lessons learned from the earthquake and offers opportunities for multiple stakeholders to collaborate in disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts.

The Soka Gakkai student division organized a panel session titled “Partnerships that Function as Disaster Resilience” and ran an

exhibition booth in the forum. In the panel session, Akiko Benimura from SDGs Tohoku introduced their activities. Takahiro Shoji from Umibe-no-Toshokan (“Library on the Shore,” named after the Haruki Murakami novel Kafka on the Shore) spoke about creating a grassroots network of people engaged with DRR. He asserted that activities aimed at local people must be made enjoyable to attract their participation.

A Soka Gakkai student division representative shared the findings of their annual DRR surveys from the past decade. He highlighted declining levels of awareness of the earthquake and DRR among students and advocated for generating more innovative partnerships in order to engage more students.



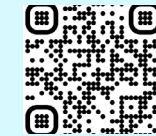
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Soka Gakkai student division representatives at the Sendai Bosai Mirai Forum

SGI - Action for Peace website



Find out more



Human Rights Education Open Web Resource



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Soka Gakkai website



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