



PEACE ACTIVITIES

Annual Report

2021

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Soka Gakkai International

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

Individual Soka Gakkai members strive to actualize their inherent potential while contributing as empowered global citizens to their local communities and responding to the shared issues facing humankind.

The Soka Gakkai and the SGI (Soka Gakkai International) engage in activities to promote the culture of peace. The SGI has been accredited as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 1983.

Action on Global Issues

Working with the UN, NGOs and other stakeholders, the SGI undertakes efforts to address global issues through activities such as raising awareness and bringing ideas and recommendations to the UN. The SGI Office for UN Affairs based in New York and Geneva is actively engaged at the United Nations.

The SGI was an early proponent of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–14) and played an active role in the UN process for the realization of the World Programme for Human Rights Education which was launched in 2005 as a follow-up to the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995–2004). It launched the “Second People’s Decade for Nuclear Abolition” in 2018 following the first Decade launched in 2007, in order to support efforts to realize the early entry into force and universalization of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

The SGI actively participates in networks including NGO committees on specific themes such as peace and disarmament, human rights education and gender equality in New York and Geneva, as well as the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN (CoNGO).

Peace, Culture and Education

The ideal of peace describes a world in which all people can freely thrive and express their potential, a world in which the dignity of life and the fundamental rights of all people are respected. Promoting culture means enhancing and celebrating our shared humanity and interconnectedness. Education, in its broad sense, is the ongoing cultivation of our humanity.

Peace Proposals

The annual peace proposals of Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), have played an important role in inspiring action toward these ideals both at local and global levels.

I. Peace and Disarmament

The SGI’s nuclear abolition efforts trace their roots back to 1957, when second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda (1900–58) made a public declaration calling for the elimination and prohibition of nuclear weapons. The SGI has been working toward realizing a world free from nuclear weapons and the creation of a culture of peace through a number of initiatives and events, including the latest exhibition “Everything You Treasure—For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons.”

II. Sustainable Development and Climate Action

The SGI promotes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and sustainable living through community-based non-formal education efforts. It has developed various educational tools including the “Seeds of Hope & Action” exhibition, a joint initiative between the SGI and the Earth Charter International (ECI) launched in support of UNESCO’s ESD for 2030 initiative. Climate justice resonates with Buddhist philosophy and the principle of standing with the most vulnerable in society. The SGI has begun working on awareness raising, mitigation and advocacy at the global, national and local levels.

III. Humanitarian Relief and Disaster Risk Reduction

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

IV. Human Rights Education

The quest for human rights can be perceived as “a challenge of otherness” in which individuals develop the courage to acknowledge, respect and appreciate the differences among people. The SGI is engaging in activities to advance human rights education in support of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005–ongoing) and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011).

V. Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

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

SGI President's 2022 PEACE PROPOSAL

Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), issued his 40th annual peace proposal on January 26, 2022. Titled “Transforming Human History: The Light of Peace and Dignity,” it offers concrete ideas for tackling the climate crisis and achieving inclusive education and nuclear disarmament.

Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, former UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative and founder of the Global Movement for the Culture of Peace, comments: “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. I am encouraged he has highlighted empowerment of people as a major element in building the Culture of Peace.”

Concerning humanity’s response to the pandemic, Ikeda called for solidarity built on awareness of our interconnectedness and stated: “I believe firmly that the key factor determining the direction of history will prove not to have been the virus, but we humans ourselves.”

He emphasized the need to address the inequalities the pandemic has exposed, and that gender equality and women’s empowerment are key to overcoming the crisis and building a global society that sustains human dignity.

On environmental issues, Ikeda called for more coordinated efforts in implementing the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity and Convention to Combat Desertification, stating: “Climate change, biodiversity and desertification are deeply intertwined, and solutions are likewise interconnected.”

He also proposed creating a youth council to advise the UN on the comprehensive protection of the “global commons,” the environmental resources essential to all humanity.

Concerned about the impact of disruptions to education, Ikeda suggested that the UN Transforming Education Summit planned for September focus on education in emergencies, inclusive education and learning for global citizenship.

Toward the first meeting of States Parties to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), Ikeda stressed the urgency of “detoxifying” ourselves from nuclear-dependent security doctrines and strongly called for Japan, other nuclear-dependent states and the nuclear-weapon states to participate as observers, stating: “As more countries that presently feel they cannot sign or ratify the TPNW begin to positively acknowledge its true value and significance, I am confident that this will catalyze the energy and political will needed to put an end to the era of nuclear weapons.”

I. Peace and Disarmament

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) entered into force on January 22, 2021, and is now a legally binding agreement under international law. SGI, as an international partner of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), has been committed to the establishment and entry into force of the treaty as a representative of civil society. The treaty has marked a historic milestone toward the end of the nuclear weapon era. In order to enhance the treaty's effectiveness, it is necessary to inform the broader public of the significance of the treaty more widely. Collaborating with ICAN and other civil society actors and organizations, the SGI has been dedicated to the universalization and expansion of support for the treaty by promoting peace and disarmament education at the grassroots level through the creation of new digital tools as well as the holding of online events. The SGI has also played a central role in organizing important events as part of the disarmament community, such as the Humanitarian Disarmament Forum (HDF), and been an active contributor at such fora and events.

Peace and Disarmament

01

SGI's Digital Tools Celebrating the Entry into Force of the TPNW

On the occasion of the entry into force of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on January 22, 2021, the SGI produced two educational tools to communicate the significance of this milestone. The treaty was adopted in July 2017 at United Nations Headquarters. It is the first time that international law comprehensively prohibits all activities

related to nuclear weapons. Soka Gakkai President Minoru Harada issued a statement in which he welcomed the entry into force of the TPNW and expressed his deepest respect and appreciation to all those who have struggled toward the shared objective of ridding the world of nuclear weapons, including the world's hibakusha. He also stated that the Soka

Gakkai has long been committed to the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons as its social mission and responsibility, and as heirs to the spiritual legacy to which the organization's three founding presidents have dedicated their lives. He concluded by having that the members of the Soka Gakkai will continue to take action to realize a world free from nuclear weapons.

TPNW: Visual Storytelling Tool

This is a digital tool that the SGI produced in cooperation with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) to provide a brief introduction to the treaty and its significance through visual storytelling.

The slides are available and downloadable in both [English](#) and [Japanese](#).

Handbook about the TPNW

In addition, the SGI also created a handbook about the entry into force of the treaty. It briefly explains what the treaty is about, how it was adopted and what it envisions.

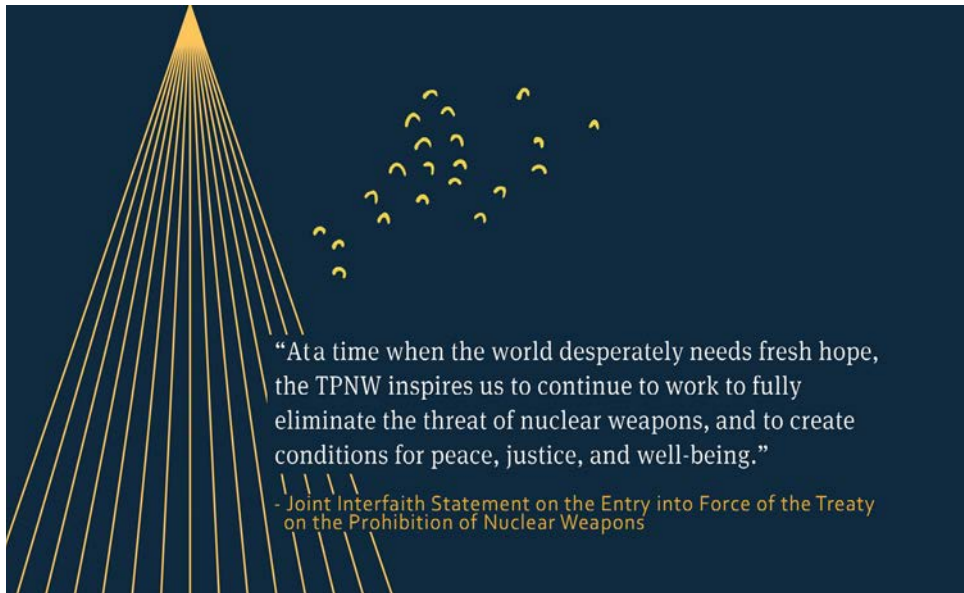
TV program

On the occasion of the entry into force of the TPNW, a TV program *Towards a Future Free From Nuclear Weapons* (tentative translation from the Japanese title) was broadcast on the Tokyo Metropolitan Television (TOKYO MX). The program was sponsored by the Soka Gakkai and featured interviews with [Dr. Masao Tomonaga](#), the honorary director of [the Japanese Red Cross Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Hospital](#), and Beatrice Fihn, executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).



On January 22, 2021, celebrating the entry into force of the TPNW, SGI produced a handbook to inform the public about the treaty and the significance of its entry into force toward the total prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons.

Joint Interfaith Statement on the Entry into Force of the TPNW



Welcoming the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) entering into force on January 22, 2021, over 160 organizations worldwide [endorsed a joint interfaith statement](#) coordinated by Faith Communities Concerned About Nuclear Weapons, of which the SGI is a part.

The endorsers of the statement congratulated, celebrated and appreciated the countries that have ratified and signed this important treaty, as well as all who have worked for nuclear disarmament and abolition for many decades. The statement urged that the possession, development and threat to use nuclear weapons is immoral and that there are no safe hands for these weapons.

Highlighting the significance of the treaty, it stated: **“We rejoice at the possibilities of a new world that this Treaty ushers in. At a time when the world desperately needs fresh hope, the TPNW inspires us to continue to work to fully eliminate the threat of nuclear weapons, and to create conditions for peace, justice, and well-being.”**

The statement recognized the legacy of the global hibakusha and invited everyone, especially those in communities of faith, to join in this work for peace, justice, and respect for life. It also urged all States to

join the growing community of States that have rejected nuclear weapons and to sign and ratify the TPNW, or work toward that end by joining the First Meeting of the States Parties planned to take place in 2022.

In conclusion, the statement looked ahead to the work that must continue: **“At this historic moment, we must act decisively to strengthen the power of the TPNW upon its entry into force, and to work for peace, cooperation, and common security.”**

Joint Interfaith Statement on Killer Robots —A Plea for Preserving Our Shared Humanity

On the occasion of the first International Day of Human Fraternity on February 4, the Soka Gakkai International worked together with Pax Christi Northern California and the World Council of

Churches to issue the joint interfaith statement [A Plea for Preserving Our Shared Humanity](#) in support of the work of the [Campaign to Stop Killer Robots](#). The statement communicates that the



development of weapons systems that lack meaningful human control violates the shared belief in our inalienable human dignity.

The statement reads, in part: **“Our shared belief in the inalienable dignity of the human person and the inestimable worth of human life demands our vigilance toward new forms of military technology that mediate the use of lethal force, especially in armed conflict and policing. An urgent and firm rejection of the development of fully**

autonomous weapons is essential to preserving our shared humanity.”

Observed on February 4, 2021, the [International Day of Human Fraternity](#) was established by the UN General Assembly, through [Resolution 75/200](#), in order to promote dialogue between members of every faith and an awareness of the common values shared by all humankind.

Endorsing Organizations (as of July 1, 2021):

1. A Gandhi Team
2. Accion Ciudadana Frente a la Pobreza
3. Ahora Querétaro
4. Buddhist Council of New York
5. CA JustFaith East Bay
6. Casa Común
7. Centro de Estudios Ecuménicos-México
8. Christian Council of Nigeria, Institute of Church and Society, Ibadan
9. Derechos de la Infancia y la Adolescencia
10. Ecumenical Peace Institute/CALC
11. Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR-USA)
12. Finnish Christian Peace Association
13. Foundation for Environmental Rights, Advocacy & Development (FENRAD Nigeria)
14. Franciscan Action Network
15. Gatef Organization
16. Interfaith Network on Drone Warfare
17. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
18. Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
19. Mexican Communion of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches (CMIRP)
20. Muslim Peace Fellowship
21. Newman Hall Non-violent Committee
22. NorCal Sabeel
23. On Earth Peace
24. Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service
25. Pastoral Social, Iglesia Anglicana de México
26. Pax Christi Australia
27. Pax Christi Metro DC-Baltimore
28. Pax Christi USA
29. Pax Christi Vlaanderen
30. PeaceHost.net
31. Religions for Peace Australia
32. Religions for Peace USA
33. Soka Gakkai International
34. Somali Human Rights Association (SOHRA)
35. St. Columba’s Episcopal Church
36. Sustainable Peace and Development Organization, Pakistan
37. World Council of Churches
38. World Yoga Community

100 Seconds to Midnight - SGI Joins Event on Climate Protection and Nuclear Disarmament

On May 13, the Grassroots Advocacy Table of the United Religions Initiative (URI) [Voices for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons Cooperation Circle](#) organized an event “100 Seconds to Midnight.” Anna Ikeda of the SGI, who was part of

the organizing team, joined the panel discussion as one of the speakers.

The event addressed the two existential threats facing humanity and our planet today: climate change and nuclear

weapons. It aimed to bring together those working for climate protection and nuclear disarmament, especially those involved in the URI network, and inspire them to engage using a spiritual perspective and to take creative action at the grassroots level. The event was attended by over 50 individuals, many of whom identified themselves as actively engaged in either nuclear disarmament or climate protection or both, and some indicated that they were new and wanted to become more actively involved.

The panel discussion brought together a diverse group of individuals whose work highlights the urgency of climate protection and nuclear disarmament, each pointing to the linkages between these two threats. Tina Cordova, co-founder of [Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium](#), addressed the effects of nuclear testing and the health implications suffered by the people in her community in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Speaking directly from her own and her family’s experience, Cordova said, “For us, the question is not if we will get cancer but when.”

Ikeda spoke about her experience of being involved in the processes that led to the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition

of Nuclear Weapons, as well as its entry into force in January 2021, and now the treaty’s universalization. She shared how she had been moved to action by the stories of survivors and reminded the audience of various actions that can be taken at the individual and grassroots levels, such as the [ICAN Cities Appeal](#) and the [Back from the Brink](#) initiative.

During the Q&A, the audience raised questions on for example how NGOs can work together beyond their silos, and success stories about engaging youth for nuclear disarmament, sustainable development and climate protection were shared. Reflecting on the discussions, participants then created a word cloud to summarize the event, which included words like “hope,” “inspiring” and “connection.” They were also provided with a 3-part [Pray, Study, Act Guide](#), which was put together for the event and will continue to be updated.

The event concluded with the [Nuclear Prayer](#) read by the Right Rev. William E. Swing, founder of URI and the Voices Cooperation Circle.



Supporting the UN High Level Forum on the Culture of Peace



The High-Level Forum on the Culture of Peace was hosted by the 75th president of the United Nations General Assembly on September 7 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The forum was convened under the theme “Transformative Role of the Culture of Peace: Promoting Resilience and Inclusion in Post-Covid Recovery,” and President of the General Assembly Volkan Bozkir gave the opening remarks. Beatrice Fihn, executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), delivered a keynote message, while Kazumi Matsui, Mayor of Hiroshima

and President of Mayors for Peace, sent a video message. Referring to the process of how the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) entered into force, Fihn stressed that it is important for ordinary citizens to take concrete actions to create peace. Afterwards, a panel discussion was led by former UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury on the theme of the forum.

The SGI supported the organization of the forum as a founding and core member of the Global Movement for the Culture of Peace (GMCoP).

SGI Signs Four Joint Statements at the UN General Assembly First Committee

On October 8, civil society joint statements were delivered at the 76th session of the UN General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security, including four which the SGI signed along with other organizations. The statements were on the themes of: gender and disarmament; protection of the environment in relation to armed conflict; humanitarian disarmament; and youth engagement and peace, disarmament and nonproliferation education. The statement on humanitarian disarmament points out that autonomous weapons

systems, such as AI weapons, could increase oppression of the socially vulnerable, and called for discussions on disarmament to be conducted with the aim of avoiding structures of discrimination. In the statement on youth engagement and peace, disarmament and nonproliferation education, it called for the role of youth in disarmament to be recognized and have greater value.



[© ICAN]

2021 Humanitarian Disarmament Forum on “Race and Intersectionality”

On November 3, 2021, Soka Gakkai International and Stop Killer Robots co-hosted Part 3 of the Humanitarian Disarmament Forum (HDF) on Race and Intersectionality. It was the final formal stage of the organizations’ year-long collective learning journey that started in October 2020. The HDF 2020-2021 focused on diversity—particularly race—and how work to advance humanitarian disarmament could be more intersectional.

Part 1 of the HDF explored the concepts of power, privilege, and oppression. During Part 2, participants shared a period of guided self-study using workshops and a monthly book club where they further considered these concepts, discussed how they manifest in disarmament, and exchanged personal reflections.

Part 3 reunited approximately 65 participants to review what they had learned, assess what they had changed, and examine ways the humanitarian disarmament community can commit to building an intersectional, anti-racist practice moving

forward. The Forum began with opening remarks from co-host Hayley Ramsay-Jones of Soka Gakkai International, followed by a panel discussion made up of experts by profession and experience. They discussed the root causes of systemic and structural racism, how inequity shows up in non-profit spaces, and why it is critical for our organizations to prioritize a race-sensitive and intersectional approach. Panelists included:

- Siana Bangura (she/her): writer, producer, performer, and community organizer of campaigns addressing race, class, and gender and their intersections
- Lydia X. Z. Brown (they/them): writer, organizer, attorney and speaker on violence against disabled people, rhetoric/discourse on disability, autistic culture and community, disability representation, ableism in society, asexuality and disability, queerness and disability
- Maher Akreimi (he/him): writer and Program Manager at Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security, and Conflict Transformation (WCAPS)

Following the panel discussion, workshops on “Allyship, Accomplice, Co-conspirator vs. Performativity and Tokenism” and “Organizational Structures and Change” engaged participants in discussions on their reflections and what they had learned, as well as ideas for course-corrective action.

The day-long Forum culminated with co-organizers from Stop Killer Robots and

HDF participants sharing their personal learning journeys and future hopes for the humanitarian disarmament community. A recorded music performance by musician Denise Chaila concluded the event.

For more information about the Humanitarian Disarmament Forum on Race and Intersectionality and the themes it discussed, visit the HDF 2020-21 webpage.



Exhibition “Everything You Treasure—For a World Free from Nuclear Weapons”



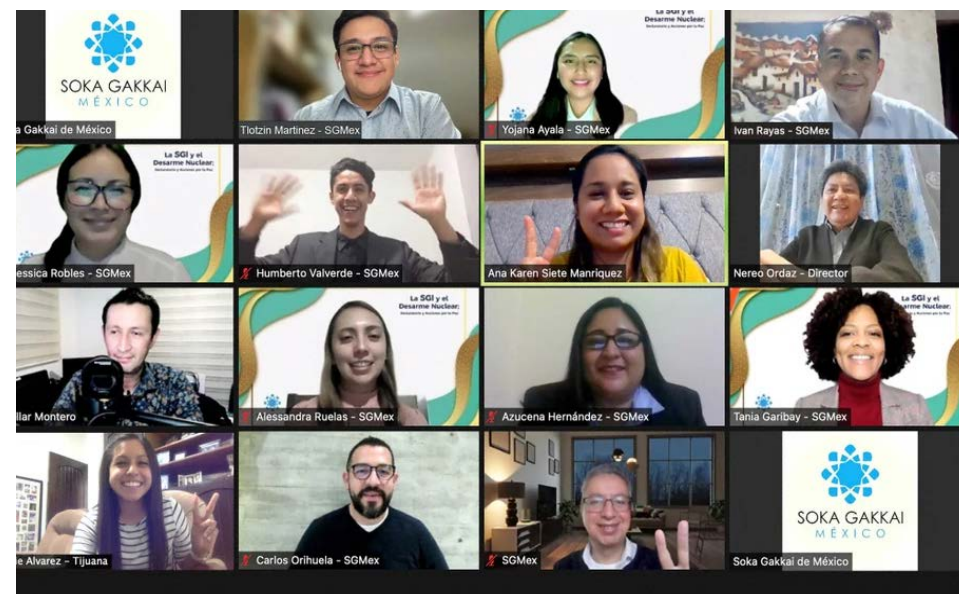
Online version of the exhibition “Everything You Treasure - For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons”

The SGI-ICAN antinuclear exhibition “Everything You Treasure—For a World Free from Nuclear Weapons” has now been shown in more than 90 cities in 21 countries since its first showing in Hiroshima in August 2012.

In May 2021, due to the spread of COVID-19, SGI-Germany and the city of Cologne

launched the exhibition online making the exhibition available via a special website.

In August 2017, the SGI, OPANAL, Soka Gakkai of Mexico (SGMex) and the Foreign Ministry of Mexico cohosted the exhibition “Everything You Treasure—For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons” in



Online forum on nuclear disarmament hosted by the youth of SGMex © Seikyo Shimbun

a historical building located in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas (Plaza of the Three Cultures) in the Tlatelolco neighborhood of Mexico City. A monument was unveiled there to commemorate both the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the 60th anniversary of second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda’s declaration calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

On August 17, 2021, SGMex launched an online version of “Everything You Treasure—For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons,” created by SGI and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). During the opening ceremony, Professor Eduardo Torres Maldonado of the Metropolitan Autonomous University delivered a lecture

calling for a philosophy suitable to this time of crisis. The online exhibition is published as a video in which curators provide explanations and highlights of each panel.

On September 8, 2021, the youth of SGMex hosted an online forum on nuclear disarmament, which began with the showing of an earlier exhibition on nuclear disarmament from February 2002 that was cohosted by the SGI, the OPANAL and the Foreign Ministry of Mexico. Participants also watched a testimony by Ms. Sueko Takada, who experienced the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. Youth members then gave a presentation introducing second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda’s 1957 declaration, which called for the abolition of nuclear weapons

and stressed the importance of the Treaty of the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The TPNW entered into force on January 22, 2021. Participants were also shown a video of SGMex's activities for nuclear disarmament, introducing the decades-long collaboration between SGMex and the Agency for the Prohibition

of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), the agency responsible for the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

Peace and Disarmament

09

Online Film Showing and Discussion on Nuclear Weapons and the SDGs

To mark the 76th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee in Japan held an online screening of the film *Hiroshima Lost*—

A Labor of Love (in Japanese) directed and composed by Masaaki Tanabe, an atomic bomb survivor and filmmaker, as part of the *SDGs Online Cinema Series* on August 6. After the screening, a special webpage



The film *Hiroshima Lost—A Labor of Love*, shows CG reproductions of the streets of Hiroshima before the bombing

(in Japanese) of the SGI-ICAN new digital tool relating to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was launched, and the initiatives of the international community for nuclear abolition including the entry into force of the treaty were introduced. It was stressed that the efforts to realize a world without nuclear weapons are closely related to the

SDGs, for example gender equality, human rights and environmental conservation.

During the discussion session, participants actively exchanged their opinions. The event particularly focused on Goal 5 (Gender Equality), Goal 13 (Climate Change) and Goal 16 (Peace).

Peace and Disarmament

10

Survey on Peace Awareness by Youth Division in Japan

As part of its “SOKA Global Action 2030: A Decade of Youth Action and Solidarity,” the Soka Gakkai Youth Division in Japan conducted a survey on awareness of issues related to peace among young people.

The student division of the Chugoku region that includes Hiroshima conducted its 26th Peace Awareness Survey from May 7 to June 27, and 287 students attending universities and vocational schools in the five prefectures of the Chugoku region responded. On July 28, the results were announced at the City Press Club in Hiroshima City Hall.

According to the survey results, the

percentage of people who answered correctly when asked, “When were the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?” was 84% in Hiroshima and 81% in Nagasaki, and these percentages had increased from 2020. When asked if they knew about the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) which entered into force in January 2021, 46% of respondents said they knew about it, an increase of 23 percentage points from the previous survey, while 45% said they had only heard of it. With regard to the entry into force of the TPNW, 36% said they believed this would cause more countries to ratify it, and 28% said it would encourage more discussion among civil society.

In response to the question, “Do you support the position of the Government of Japan, which has not joined the TPNW?” 20% replied in the affirmative, while 47% said that they did not support this position. Both figures showed an increase from 2020. 33% said they did not know, a decrease of 15 percentage points from 2020. In response to the question, “Do you think nuclear weapons may be used in future wars and conflicts?” 76% of

respondents said they agreed, a decrease of 5 percentage points from 2020. Finally, in response to a question as to whether it will be possible to abolish nuclear weapons in the future, 20% said it would be possible and 54% said it would be impossible, but that disarmament would be possible. Responses to this question showed no major change from previous years.



The student division of the Chugoku region announced the results of the 26th Peace Awareness Survey at the City Press Club in Hiroshima City Hall.

Office of UN Affairs Contributes to Interfaith and Civil Society Initiatives

As a core member of the Global Movement for the Culture of Peace, headed by former UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative Ambassador Chowdhury, the SGI has continued to provide coordination support since its inception. At the World Unity Week held in June 2021, the SGI coordinated a keynote message by the executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), Beatrice Fihn, as well as a video message by Mayors for Peace President Kazumi Matsui.

As President of the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN, Director of the SGI Office for UN Affairs Hiro Sakurai spoke at a total of six events, including the International Day of Peace, World Interfaith Harmony Week and International Day of Yoga. In addition,

when Ambassador Chowdhury received the Culture of Peace Visionary Leadership Award during World Unity Week 2021, Sakurai was invited to introduce the dialogue *Creating the Culture of Peace: A Clarion Call for Individual and Collective Transformation* by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda and Ambassador Chowdhury.

At the General Assembly of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN (CoNGO), the SGI was re-elected to its Board of Directors. The term of office is four years, from 2022 to 2025. The General Assembly was preceded by the Civil Society Summit consisting of six thematic sessions, with Sakurai facilitating the Peace and Security session and Ivy Koek serving as rapporteur for the 2030 Agenda session.

II. Sustainable Development and Climate Action

The United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were set as an urgent call for action toward 2030 with the goal of “leaving no one behind.”

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to be a global crisis in 2021, and the tremendous amount of resources that were poured into the COVID response has hampered achievement of the SDGs. The inequalities in global society brought by the pandemic have now become more serious. In 2020, meanwhile, there was an expectation that a decrease in economic activity would lead to a ceasing of environmental degradation, but it is now being revealed that that impact is in fact quite limited and that more and more efforts are still absolutely necessary to protect our planet from catastrophe.

In order to respond to these global challenges, the SGI has been implementing activities such as awareness-raising and collaborating with other UN agencies, NGOs and faith groups with the shared aim of ensuring our sustainable future.

Sustainable Development and Climate Action

01

SGI Presents on Climate Initiatives at ECOS Community Call

On March 10, Alexandra Goossens-Ishii and Hayato Yamashita of the SGI presented at the [Education, Communication & Outreach Stakeholders Community \(ECOS\)](#) community call. These community calls have been an opportunity for

ECOS members to collaborate together to enhance and improve climate change education, communication and outreach.

During the [community call](#), Goossens-Ishii and Yamashita presented an overview of the SGI’s engagement with the UN and some of their recent climate initiatives and



awareness-raising tools and resources. This included the [Mapping app](#) for tracking actions to support the SDGs, and the recently launched [Seeds of Hope & Action: Making the SDGs a Reality](#) exhibition, co-created with Earth Charter International.

ECOS, formed in 2016 and officially recognized by the UN Climate Change Secretariat, supports effective and innovative efforts to build the capacity of individuals, communities and organizations (both non-government and government) to make informed climate decisions. The recording is available [here](#).

Sustainable Development and Climate Action


02

SGI Supports Climate and Environment Advocacy at the Human Rights Council

At the 48th session of the Human Rights Council, States adopted two new resolutions in a historic breakthrough. The first [resolution](#) recognizes the right of all to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Although this right had been

recognized at the national level by the vast majority of countries, its recognition at the universal level remained challenging for several decades.

As part of the Global Coalition for the



“Resolutely adopting a human rights-based approach is key to secure the respect for the dignity of life, particularly of those who are already in vulnerable situations and feel more acutely the impacts of these multifaceted crises and inadequate responses to them.”

-Joint statement on Human Rights and Climate Change


formal recognition of the right to a healthy environment, the SGI actively called for this recognition, joining thousands of civil society organizations, social movements, local communities and Indigenous Peoples, with the hope that it should act as a catalyst for the right to be better respected, protected and fulfilled by states and other stakeholders.

The second [resolution](#) established a new UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change. For more than a decade, civil society organizations and Indigenous Peoples advocated for the creation of this mandate. Faith voices highlighted from the start the need to address climate justice and the impacts of climate change and climate action on

human rights. This historic breakthrough was also the result of the continued advocacy and work of the Small Island and Developing States (SIDS), and the fact that the core group supporting this resolution gathered states across all the regions of the world signals a new era for rights-based climate policy.

As part of the Geneva Interfaith Forum on Climate Change, Environment and Human Rights (GIF), the SGI issued joint statements and co-organized [an event](#) gathering the voices and perspectives from small island states, Indigenous Peoples, young people and faith groups to urgently address climate change as a human rights issue.

Together for the Planet: Interfaith Voices for More Ambitious Climate Action Webinar



Watch the second and third parts of the webinar [here](#).

On April 28, an online webinar calling for more ambitious action ahead of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), was co-organized by the SGI and other members of the Interfaith Liaison Committee to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The event gathered more than 100 participants, bringing together diverse voices calling for more ambitious climate action. The SGI's Alexandra Goossens-Ishii facilitated the breakout sessions between the three parts of the webinar.

The first part of the webinar focused on the issue of “real net-zero” carbon emissions and nationally determined contributions (NDCs), with Niclas Hällström, director of What Next Forum, and Jamie Williams, senior policy advisor for Islamic Relief Worldwide. As Hällström shared, “Real zero means 100% renewable energy that is people centered and increasingly locally owned and community oriented.” It means “immediate action at source, not carbon offsets elsewhere or reliance on future risky technologies that may never deliver.”



In the second part, climate activists from around the world, including the Sami indigenous peoples of Norway, women from Bangladesh and young activists from Burundi, shared the impact of climate change on their regions.

During the final part of the webinar, representatives from ACT Alliance, Eco Dharma and Islamic Relief Worldwide highlighted their key advocacy steps toward COP26.

Mapping Introduced at UNESCO Conference on Education for Sustainable Development

On May 17, Earth Charter International and the SGI organized a side event at the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development. The online event titled “Sharing Positive Actions on the SDGs and the Earth Charter, with Mapping” introduced an engaging social media app, [Mapping](#), that was co-produced by Earth Charter International and the SGI. Mapping allows people to discover the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Earth Charter principles by sharing images of their sustainable actions and projects.

Carola Pedreschi from Miami Dade College (USA) and Randall Santamaría from Guaravito Sostenibilidad y Conservación (Costa Rica) shared their experiences of using the Mapping app. The SGI’s Alexandra Goossens-Ishii shared how Mapping embodies the fact that although our resources are finite, human potential is infinite. She also introduced the SGI’s perspective on Mapping, which is based on the core belief that everything starts with the actions of one individual which can inspire a chain reaction of positive change.



Speaking at the International Mother Earth Day Celebration

On April 22, The Annual Earth Festival was held in observance of the International Mother Earth Day, organized by the World Yoga Community, United Religions Initiative (URI), Unity Earth and others, and co-sponsored by the Committee of Religious NGOs

at the UN (CRNGO).

Hiro Sakurai was invited to speak as CRNGO President and introduced relevant parts from the Earth Charter. The event was moderated by Martha Gallahue of URI.

Raising Awareness through New Seeds of Hope and Action Exhibition

In January 2021, the new exhibition, Seeds of Hope & Action (SOHA) was released by Earth Charter International and the SGI. In February, the introductory online event was held three times due to time differences. In total about two hundred people joined the event and exchanged views on the SDGs after enjoying the exhibition. Currently it is used as a primarily online tool to contribute to the achievement of Target 4.7 of the SDGs and to promote the



The exhibition “Seeds of Hope & Action: Making the SDGs a Reality” on display at its launch during COP26 at Webster’s Theatre in Glasgow, UK.

new international framework, Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving

the SDGs (ESD for 2030) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

In November 2021, the SOHA exhibition was held at Websters Theatre during the 26th session of the Conference of the

Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 26). During its opening ceremony, Elizabeth Wathuti, a young Kenyan environmental activist, delivered a speech and shared her memory of learning from Dr. Wangari Maathai.

Sustainable Development and Climate Action

07

Reforestation in Amazon and Togo

The Soka Institute for Environmental Studies and Research of the Amazon, located in a suburb of Manaus, Brazil, was established in 1992. The institute has three focal areas: education for sustainable development (ESD), support for academic research and the running of a seed bank. In 2020 it launched the Life Memorial project, planting one tree in honor of each Brazilian victim of COVID-19, in cooperation with other organizations. More than 150,000 trees will be planted over a four-year period in the Amazon region.

In Togo, West Africa in September 2020, a joint program between Soka Gakkai Japan and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) was launched with the aim of forest landscape restoration (FLR) and the improvement of women's living



standards in order to promote the SDGs and to tackle the climate crisis.

The main conductor of the program on the ground is the African Women's Network for Community Management of Forests (REFACOF) that has a rich record of empowering African women and reforestation. REFACOF provides women living in marginalized areas in the prefectures of Lac and Blitta with skills for forest management and technical assistance according to local needs. In the first year of the program, more than 100 participants received the training and succeeded in restoring more than 20 hectares.

Sustainable Development and Climate Action

08

Participation in COP26

SGI representatives attended the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), in Glasgow, UK, in October and November of 2021. The representatives included youth from Italy, Spain and the UK.

On November 1, the SGI issued an official statement at a press conference calling



Alexandra Masako Goossens-Ishii (second from right) and other representatives of the SGI engaged actively at COP26.

for COP26 to deliver on climate issues, strengthen education and provide genuine opportunities for youth participation. In the conference, the SGI promoted advocacy and networking mainly from the perspectives of human rights and education.

Furthermore, the SGI, SGI-UK and the Center for Applied Buddhism co-organized a number of events at Websters Theatre during the conference including a multi-faith dialogue on climate issues on November 2, and a panel discussion titled "Beyond Rhetoric—Youth Leadership for Climate Action" on November 3.

Sustainable Development and Climate Action

09

SDGs Online Cinema Series

In 2021, the Peace Committee of Soka Gakkai Japan launched a new initiative for raising awareness of the SDGs in Japan titled "SDGs Online Cinema Series." A total of five sessions were held and some 300 to 400 people attended each time. During the events a film screening and expert lecture were provided virtually. After the lecture, the audience exchanged views on the issue with each other during the group discussions.

The five sessions:

1. **The Man Who Mends Women / Lecture by Kazuyo Hanai (joint-representative, RITA-Congo)**
2. **School of Babel / Lecture by Yukari Enoi (specially appointed professor, Osaka University)**
3. **A Plastic Ocean / Lecture by Masahiro Takemoto (professional diver and environmental activist)**
4. **Hiroshima Lost—A Labor of Love**
5. **Beautiful Islands Memoirs of Sinking Islands / Lecture by Yuki Murohashi (representative director, Japan Youth Conference)**

III. Humanitarian Relief and Disaster Risk Reduction

In 2021, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic remaining an unprecedented challenge, many natural disasters also occurred around the world. In the context of disasters, using their human networks and experience, Soka Gakkai organizations and members continued to respond promptly and provide support to affected peoples and communities. In addition, the SGI is sharing with global society the lessons learned from the viewpoint of a faith-based organization (FBO).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, where human mobility is a threat, refugees live in increasingly severe environments with scarce support. The Soka Gakkai has been engaged in support for refugees and related awareness-raising since the 1980s. In addition, it launched a new program of music education in Jordan in 2021.

Humanitarian Relief and Disaster Risk Reduction

01

SGI Joins Discussions on the Role of Faith-Based Organizations (FBO) with UNHCR and JLI

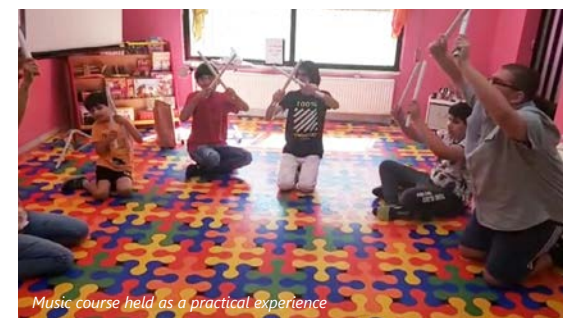
In April 2020, the SGI was invited to an online consultation organized by UNHCR on the theme of the role of faith-based organizations (FBOs) in responding to COVID-19. Participating organizations introduced their efforts and support activities during the pandemic and further discussed how to prevent the spread of infection. Since then, the SGI has joined meetings of the FBO Interfaith Communication Initiative Task Force launched by UNHCR and FBOs.

The SGI has also taken part in a research project on faith actors' response to the COVID-19 pandemic conducted by the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI), a network of researchers and faith actors worldwide. The SGI has shared information on Soka Gakkai Japan and a few other national Soka Gakkai organizations' COVID response activities and conducted discussions with the researchers.

Humanitarian Relief and Disaster Risk Reduction

02

Music Education Program in Jordan



Music course held as a practical experience

A program called *Al-Musiqa Tjam'ana* (meaning "Music Brings Us Together") was launched in Jordan in January 2021 in collaboration between the Soka Gakkai, Musicians Without Borders (MWB) and local organizations. This three-year program aims to provide refugees, local children and young people with opportunities to receive music education or training for effective music education. The first year of the program focused on fostering

educators, and about 30 people who already have experience in music education participated. The original schedule was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and occasionally it had to take place online instead. Nevertheless, it has succeeded in conducting good quality education, and in August several workshops for children were held at various locations in Jordan.



Although music education is not common in Jordan, this project is gaining popularity and there are many people keen to participate.

IV. Human Rights Education

Collaborating with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and Amnesty International, the SGI has been engaged in developing a multimedia educational tool “Stories of Young Human Rights Educators” to support the implementation of the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2020-2024) which focuses on human rights education for youth. The SGI continued to serve as chair of the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning, working closely with other NGOs to bring the voices of civil society to the United Nations by submitting two oral statements and one written statement to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC).

The SGI also committed to raising awareness at the grassroots level through the holding of the World Youth Forum and the publication of the Japanese-language edition of the teaching material “Our Rights” which is used in the international project led by Slovenia since 2005 to educate children about their rights. In addition, the SGI strengthened cooperation with UNHCR, serving as co-chair of the Global Protection Cluster Task Team on Human Rights Engagement, led by UNHCR.

Human Rights Education

01

Advocacy on Human Rights Education for and with Youth and COVID-19

2021 is an important milestone for human rights education as it marks the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011). It is also one year since the start of the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, which began during the unprecedented challenges of

the COVID-19 outbreak.

On March 10, the SGI prepared and co-sponsored the [oral statement](#) delivered by the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) on behalf of 23 NGOs titled: “COVID-19, Human Rights and Youth.” The statement called on

Member States to concretely address the impact of the pandemic on human rights. Furthermore, it emphasized the right to quality of education especially during a time of crisis.

The video of the oral statement can be viewed via [UN Web TV](#).

On February 19, Elisa Gazzotti of the SGI and chair of the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education participated in a discussion with UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education Dr. Koumbou Boly Barry. The meeting was organized by Ignasi Grau Callizo, general director of the International Organization for the Right to Education and Freedom of Education (OIDEL), and brought together 18 NGOs involved with the NGO Platform on the Right to Education.

Dr. Barry stated: “Education starts with cultivating the potential of all individuals— it is more and more important to cultivate art and music education.” Creativity must be liberated, and she pointed out that this can be achieved by connecting cultural rights with the right to education.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION SHOULD NOT BE PAUSED

“We encourage Member States to address the human rights impacts of the pandemic in a concrete way through recommendations during the UPR Working Group sessions and in particular the right to quality of education. Especially in the times of the crisis, member states must have a coherent approach to human rights education.”

-Joint Statement on Covid-19, Human Rights and Youth

Human Rights Education

02

UNHCR and NGOs Consult on Countering Xenophobia, Racism and Discrimination

On April 28, the SGI attended the monthly consultation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and NGOs on the topic of “Countering Xenophobia, Racism, and Discrimination.”

This forum was an opportunity to further discuss how the UNHCR and NGOs can prevent and respond to xenophobia, racism and discrimination, as well as to review the [2020 UNHCR Guidance on](#)



[Racism and Xenophobia](#), and to hear about NGOs' efforts to address these issues.

Elisa Gazzotti of the SGI, and chair of the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education (NGO WG on HREL), highlighted the importance of human rights education as the key to changing behaviors and attitudes in order to address xenophobia, racism and discrimination at the individual level. Gazzotti shared the advocacy efforts of the NGO WG on HREL to strengthen legal frameworks and ensure that States implement human rights education at the national level. In addition,

she introduced the open resource website, [Transforming Lives: The Power of Human Rights Education](#) and the music education project Al-Musiqa Tjam'ana (Music Brings Us Together) as an example of building social inclusion.

Speakers at the consultation included: Caroline Harper Jantuah, senior advisor, inclusion, diversity and gender equity for UNHCR, Valérie Svobodová, senior human rights adviser for UNHCR, and Gloria Kivuva, communications manager, East Africa Regional Bureau for Islamic Relief Worldwide.

SGI co-organizes Session at RightsCon 2021 on Standing Up for Youth Rights

During the [RightsCon 2021](#), which took place from 7 to 11 June, the SGI co-organized a session titled “Standing Up for Youth Rights: Civil Society in Solidarity” together with Accountability Lab, Global Fund for Children and the World Organization of the Scout Movement.

The conference session focused on the strength of young people who, even in an increasingly challenging environment for activism exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic, have not stopped mobilizing for human rights. Youth have convened in their local and digital communities—big and small—to strengthen human rights education and engage each other in the process of building back better together for resilient societies. At the same time, youth have faced unique challenges such as school closures, increased violence against girls and interrupted social and professional development.

During the final part of the session, participants had the

opportunity to divide into breakout groups to discuss different themes and tackle specific key questions. One of the group discussions focused on human rights education and was facilitated by Elisa Gazzotti of the SGI, who currently serves as the chair of the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning. Some of the key highlights from the discussion included the importance for civil society to reach out to the most marginalized youth and directly learn from them by listening to their concerns. In addition, tools such as storytelling, as well as investing in training and capacity building, were emphasized as key elements to ensure that young people develop their full potential.



Webinar on Human Rights Education in Humanitarian Settings

In view of World Refugee Day on June 20 and the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011), [The Global Protection Cluster Task Team on Human Rights Engagement](#) hosted a webinar titled “Human Rights Education in Humanitarian Settings: Challenges and Opportunities.”

The webinar was held on June 17 and was moderated by Elisa Gazzotti of the SGI who serves as co-chair of the task team. Some key points shared during the webinar included how human rights education is an essential tool to empower rights-holders to claim and exercise their rights, enhance the protection of displaced persons and foster social cohesion. Furthermore, by seeing the stark realities of displaced

communities, it was also stressed that it is important to recognize existing gaps and seek solutions to ensure refugees can fully realize their potential.

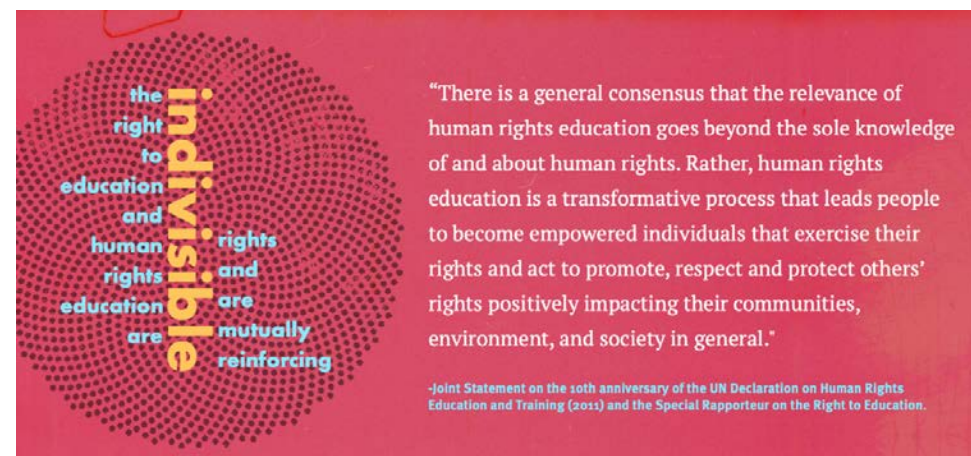
Speakers included representatives from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNICEF’s Makani programme (“My Space” in Arabic) in Jordan and Overseas Development Institute (ODI).



Joint Statement on Human Rights Education at HRC47

During the 47th regular session of the Human Rights Council (HRC47), Dr. Koumbou Boly Barry, UN special rapporteur on the right to education, presented her [annual report](#) on the cultural dimension of the right to education. On this occasion, the SGI, on behalf of 24 members of the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning, submitted a joint [written statement](#) proposing to examine human rights education implementation in her

forthcoming reports. Such a step would contribute to promoting, safeguarding and implementing both the right to education and to human rights education for the direct benefit of young people and society as a whole. As the statement highlights: “The right to education and human rights education are indivisible rights and are mutually reinforcing and advancement in each area promotes advancement in the other.”



Publication of Japanese Version of "Our Rights"

In July, the Japanese-language edition of the teaching tool "Our Rights" for human rights education was jointly published by the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee. The material has been used in the "Our Rights" project, an international project conceived and led by Slovenia, which regards human rights as one of the key

priorities in policy making. To date, the project has enabled human rights education for 250,000 children in 26 countries in Europe, Asia, the [Middle East](#), Latin America and Africa. The publication represents a new start for future cooperation between Slovenia and Japan to promote universal values and respect for human rights.

Panel Discussion on the 10th Anniversary of the UNDHRET

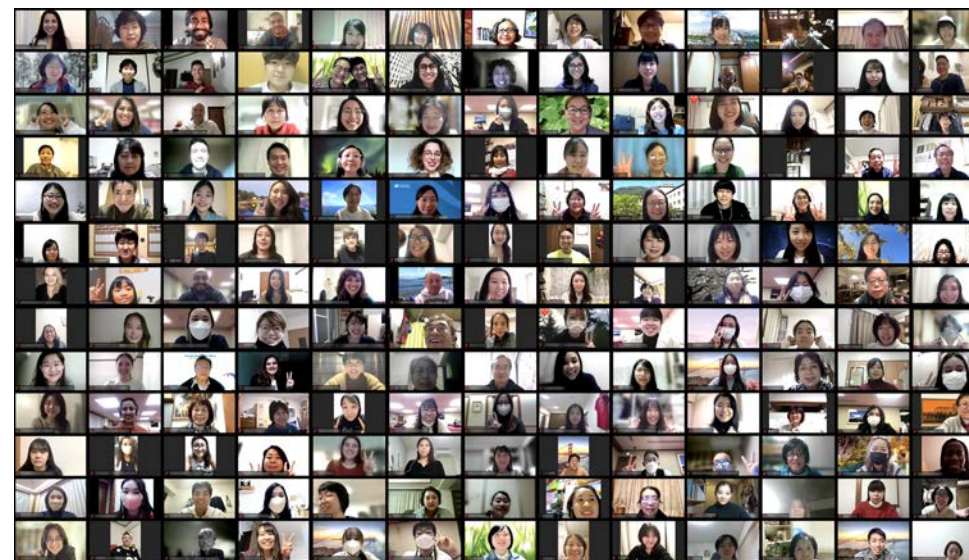
On September 29, a High Level Panel was held on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (UNDHRET). The story of Irfaan Mangera, a young human rights educator from South Africa, was previewed from the "Stories of Young Human Rights Educators," a multimedia educational tool being co-produced by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights



(OHCHR), Amnesty International and the SGI. President Borut Pahor of Slovenia which is a member of the Platform for Human Rights Education and Training, and the UN Secretary-General's Envoy

on Youth Jayathma Wickramanayake sent messages to the event. On this occasion, the Soka Gakkai co-sponsored an oral statement delivered by Amnesty International.

2022 World Youth Forum



On December 12, Amnesty International Japan and the SGI co-hosted a virtual World Youth Forum to mark Human Rights Day (December 10). The event was sponsored by the United Nations Information Centre, NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning, Center for the Promotion of Human Rights Education

and the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Japan, and was supported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. A total of 550 participants gathered from 20 countries and territories. In the first part, young human rights educators from around the world gave presentations on

their human rights education activities, and one of the videos of the multimedia educational tool “Stories of Young Human Rights Educators” featuring Irfaan Mangera, an educator from South Africa, was screened.

In the second part, participants broke into small groups and discussed how they can tackle human rights issues in their own communities.

Human Rights Education

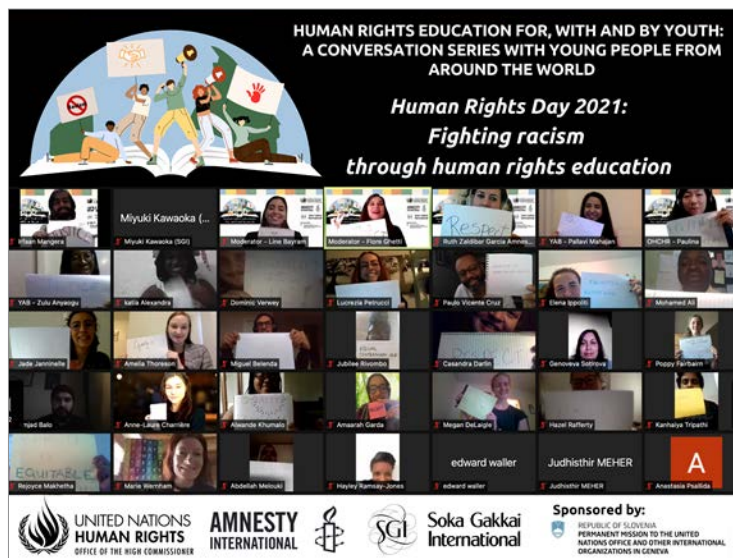
09

Launch of ‘Stories of Young Human Rights Educators’

On December 10, OHCHR, Amnesty International and the SGI, sponsored by the permanent mission of Slovenia, organized an online launch event for the “Stories of Youth Human Rights Educations” called “[Fighting racism through human rights education: A](#)

[conversation with Irfaan Mangera,](#)” as part of the conversation series “Human Rights Education for, with and by youth.”

The members of the youth advisory board were actively engaged and supported the preparation and running of the event. The recording is available [here](#).



V. Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

As part of our efforts for gender equality and women’s empowerment, we actively took part in the UN Commission on the Status of Women, contributing to discussions on young women’s leadership by sharing the analysis report on the “Young Women’s Stories—Fostering Leadership” project. Our interfaith collaborations included the annual Symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-based Organizations in International Affairs. The SGI, as vice chair of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York, helped organize the Virtual NGO CSW65 Forum.

Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

01

7th Annual Symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-Based Organizations in International Affairs

The SGI was one of seven faith-based partners including ACT Alliance, World Council of Churches, Islamic Relief USA, Seventh-Day Adventist Church, The United Methodist Church, United Religions Initiative (URI), together with UN Women and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) who co-organized the [7th annual symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-based Organizations in International Affairs](#) with the theme of: “2021: A Defining Year for Accelerating Gender Equality, Equity and Justice.” This half-day symposium

attracted a more diverse range of participants than previous years, with more than 400 people attending, given its virtual format.

The symposium, held on January 26, consisted of four sessions with a high-level opening by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, executive director, UN Women; Alice Nderitu, UN special advisor on the prevention of genocide; Ib Petersen, deputy executive director of the UNFPA; Anwar Khan, president, Islamic Relief

USA; Kiran Bali, chair, URI Global Council of Trustees; Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, general secretary, ACT Alliance.

Ivy Koek of the SGI moderated the “Women Advancing Peace and Security” session consisting of representatives from the UN Development Programme (UNDP), feminist and faith-based organizations. Just days earlier, the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) entered into force, making it a timely opportunity to highlight the pivotal role of women. The negotiation for this

treaty was driven by the leadership of women, and it is the first international nuclear weapons treaty to mention the disproportionate impacts nuclear weapons have on women and girls. As de Faria noted: “It is crucial to work with religious leaders and actors to promote a transformative faith approach, which reshapes structures and organizations to push back the pushback on gender justice.” Symposium participant documents and video from the event can be found [here](#).

7TH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

2021: A Defining Year for Accelerating Gender Equality, Equity and Justice

January 26th, 2021 8:00 am – 12:30 pm EST
Virtual event – register here: <https://bit.ly/34ir0Tx>

Advancing Young Women’s Leadership and Gender Equality at the CSW65

A Virtual Parallel Event to the 65th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

The Power of Young Women to Lead

“Young Women’s Stories—Fostering Leadership” project report launch

16 March 2021
8:00-9:30 am (EDT)

Organized by: Soka Gakkai International
Co-sponsored by: Global Network of Women Peacebuilders & NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York
With support by: World YWCA

The SGI participated in the 65th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) from March 15 to 26. The NGO CSW65 Virtual Forum gathered over 27,000 registrants with over 700 parallel events, while the UN’s official CSW session had 9,000 registrants with over 100 side events. Based on the CSW65 priority theme: “Women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving

gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls,” The SGI co-organized two virtual parallel events.

On March 16, “[The Power of Young Women to Lead](#)” event was moderated by the SGI’s Ivy Koek and attended by over 175 participants. The event was co-sponsored by the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and NGO CSW/NY with the support of the World YWCA. At the event,

the SGI launched its [report](#) on the “Young Women’s Stories—Fostering Leadership” project.

Verlaine-Diane Soobroydoo from the UN Women Executive Office on Global and Africa Strategic Priorities gave the opening words, encouraging young women to stand up and tap into their inner power.

After personal accounts from two project participants, Naomi Woyengu from the World YWCA, Papua New Guinea, and Trinna Leong from Soka Gakkai Malaysia, a presentation of the project was given by the report author, Dr. Kristen Ali Eglinton, executive director of Footage Foundation. The report, which analyzed the stories of 15 young women, highlighted the shared qualities of their leadership as courage, service, mission or purpose, compassion (including empathy), self-awareness and grit. These qualities exemplify what is referred to as “21st-century leadership,” which is vitally needed today more than ever.

In his closing remarks, Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, former Under-Secretary General and High Representative of the United Nations and initiator of the precursor decision leading to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 as the Security Council president in March 2000, emphasized that the feminist

movement benefits the whole of humanity and brings security and safety to the world.

On 18 March, the “In Dialogue with Faith and Rights for Gender Equality” event was held and moderated by Koek. Seven speakers showcased various partnerships and collaborations among faith actors and faith-based organizations and secular feminist organizations to address women’s leadership in the context of sexual and gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights. The opening address was given by Right Rev. Dom Maurício Andrade, Bishop of Brasilia.

The event was co-sponsored with ACT Alliance, FEMNET, the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, Sexual Violence Research Initiative, International Planned Parenthood Federation Western Hemisphere Region (IPPFWHR), Islamic Relief Worldwide and Red de Salud.

NGO CSW/NY Committee Activities

On September 29, UN Women organized an informal workshop to support the Commission on the Status of Women’s (CSW) consideration of its methods of work. Best practices on how other commissions and the High-Level Political Forum engaged civil society in its processes were shared. For the first time, 40 representatives from NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) were among the invitees.

During the civil society interventions Ivy Koek of the SGI, on behalf of the NGO

Committee on the Status of Women, New York (NGO CSW/NY), gave a statement of recommendations compiled based on consultations with an ad hoc group of experts, academics and NGO representatives, in addition to over 400 respondents to a NGO CSW/NY survey on the methods of work. This group has continued to meet to give further suggestions to Member States and the UN in preparation for the 66th session of the CSW.

