

A Message from the Soka University Founder

Daisaku Ikeda

The Founder of Soka University

Allow me to express my heartfelt felicitations on the holding of the 1st Peace Forum in Okinawa surrounded by the beautiful sea of *kariyushi* [“harbinger of happiness”] and the hills of Tancha. It is indeed a great privilege to hold today’s event with the participation of illustrious scholars from Kyungnam University and the Chinese Culture University, all of whom I hold in high esteem. I also express my appreciation to Eiki Senaha, President Emeritus of Meio University; distinguished members of the academia of Okinawa; Mayor Yoshimi Nagahama of Onna Village; and many others who have rendered their invaluable support in realizing today’s event.

Renowned for his outstanding leadership and commitment to education, President Park Jae-Kyu of Kyungnam University, who is also known as an authority on the reunification of the Korean peninsula, proposed that a joint research project be launched to advance peace in Asia and the rest of the world.

In March 2016, President Park visited war sites here that recount the bloody history of the Battle of Okinawa, reaffirming the profound personal pain and distress over the cruelty and destruction wrought by war that invariably divides ordinary people and exacts such a tragic toll. Driven by these sentiments, he called for renewed and united action amongst educators to initiate discourses on peace here in Okinawa.

I cannot help but appreciate the significance of today’s gathering in light of one philosophical insight from ancient China, which notes the importance of “the time of heaven” as well as “the advantage of earth” and “the harmony of men.”

As to “the time of heaven,” I would like to point out the timeliness of this Forum as it follows the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons at the UN General Assembly in New York in July. The preamble of this historic treaty declares, “Mindful of the unacceptable suffering of and harm caused to the victims of the use of nuclear weapons (*hibakusha*), as well as those affected by the testing of nuclear weapons...” It reflects the pacifist desire of the hibakusha and the citizens of the world who are determined to oppose war in any form so that such tragedies may never again occur. I, for one, believe that one of the key elements underlying the effort to build lasting peace is the crucial and irreplaceable role of carrying forward war experiences, which this Forum has also adopted as one of its themes.

The driving force behind the peace movement of the Soka Gakkai originates from two events: the refusal of its first president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, to compromise his beliefs in the face of Japan’s militarist wartime regime and, as a result, his death in prison in 1944; and the declaration of second president Josei Toda, my mentor in life, for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons in 1957, a core legacy that he entrusted to the young people of the world to actualize.

Today, the 8th of September is, in fact, the very day that Mr. Toda issued this historic declaration sixty years ago.

On this significant day, I renew my pledge to ensure that my mentor’s spirit will be embraced and carried forward by the generations of young people who follow, upholding his call that nuclear weapons are instruments of utter inhumanity and must be condemned as an “absolute evil” in order to protect and ensure the inalienable right of all people to live.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will be formally signed by UN member-states from September 20. It is paramount that public awareness be raised worldwide as the treaty’s preamble also highlights the importance of peace and disarmament education, which is why I believe this Forum’s “inheritance of war experience,” which serves as a crucial component of peace education, is so timely and relevant.

Next, I wish to talk about the significance of today’s Forum from the perspective of “the advantage of earth.” Okinawa for many years has spearheaded the effort to promote peace education. I, too, began writing *The Human Revolution* here, opening my novel with these words: “Nothing is more barbarous than war. Nothing is more cruel.” I did so in the hope that I may capture the sentiments of the people of Okinawa, who had to endure the war’s most unspeakable atrocities.

As you may know, this Soka Gakkai Okinawa Training Center was built on the site of a U.S. MACE B missile base. Working with my beloved friends in Okinawa, we set out to preserve the launch pad and bunker complex, pledging to transform what was once a facility to wage war into a center to convey the message of peace through doors open to Asia and the entire world. We were thus delighted when the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University — one of the top institutes of higher learning in Japan — was established here, making Onna Village a seat of academia as well where many of the world’s leading scholars and researchers come together.

My Okinawan friends and I are honored to welcome all of you here today, enabling us to launch a new initiative for peace together with the sharpest, most sublime minds in the world, inspiring us not only with your fiery passion to rid the world of war but also for intrepidly acting upon your beliefs over so many years.

The Ryukyu Islands have since ancient times served as a bridge to the world, a paradise of flourishing peace and culture linking the seas of Asia and the world’s oceans. It is a “Treasure Island” of peace and nonviolence underpinned by an abiding belief in life’s inherent dignity and worth — that, as Okinawans often say, “life is indeed a treasure.”

In response to President Park’s firm resolve to hold a peace forum here, a new network of wisdom and friendship is sure to emerge and expand, one facilitating a grand transformation of the “seas of war” in the world into “seas of peace.”

The third of the age-old Chinese insights is “the harmony of men.”

Regrettably, given the escalating tension among various militaries in the seas surrounding the Korean peninsula and East Asia, millions of people are fraught with a sense of impending crisis and uncertainty.

It is precisely because we live in such perilous times that unwavering solidarity among universities and educators is now more paramount than ever. For therein lies an unflagging and vibrant ethos, focused on young people and their future, to overcome conflict and division and neutralize distrust and hatred in an effort to create a community of peace.

Professor Dr. Chang Chi-Yun, the founder of the Chinese Culture University, stated that the second Chinese character for “revolution” signified “life.” It means to rejuvenate aging life and conceive from it new life. In other words, he explained, human beings were endowed with the power to shape not only the world but the times as well. It is the source from which human

dignity and the value of education springs.

Let us therefore come together in our faith in the power of people to restore and to effect dignity for all human beings as well as education's value.

A passage from the Buddhist scriptures that I have embraced since my youth reads, "All rivers flow into the sea, but does the sea turn back their waters?" My hope is that we, humanity, while inspiring one another to develop a spirit as expansive as the great sea, will strive to establish, now more than ever, a vast ocean of peace.

May all of the Forum participants gathered here today, each an established authority in your respective field, continue to serve as beacons casting the light of hope to pierce and banish the dark night with your brilliance.

In closing, I offer my heartfelt prayers that everyone here enjoy the best of health and success.

September 8, 2017