

Opening Address

SYMPOSIUM

The Alliance of Civilisations: Possible Pathways for Asia Pacific

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On behalf of the host organizations, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to this symposium, *The Alliance of Civilisations: Possible Pathways for Asia Pacific*, under the joint auspices of Soka University Peace Research Institute and the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research.

Today's keynote lecture is given by Professor Joseph Camilleri of La Trobe University, Australia, who was earlier awarded the Soka University Honorary Award. I would once again like to offer my congratulations to Professor Camilleri for being granted this award.

As a leading researcher in the field of International Relations, Professor Camilleri has sought to understand, particularly in the Asia Pacific region, what the requirements are for building a peaceful multicultural society in the modern world. Today, I hope he will share some of his insights with us.

It was in 1993 that Samuel Huntington published his article *The Clash of Civilizations* in *Foreign Affairs*. Francis Fukuyama had previously published *The End of History* as a response to the end of the Cold War, declaring the end of ideology as an axis of conflict. In response, Huntington argued that civilisation was the new-and moreover multidimensional-axis of conflict.

Although Huntington's article generated some considerable argument surrounding the vagueness of the concept of 'civilisation' and its political implications, the most important criticism was that Huntington's ideas might increase the risk of new conflicts. Many intellectuals have pointed out that this fear was expressed in US foreign policy in the 1990s.

It has also been argued that rather than being a clash or 'crisis', the 'encounter' with different value systems and cultures is an 'opportunity' that can create new culture and new values: rather than being an almost insurmountable barrier, civilisations bring diversity, the source of creativity. The large number of intellectuals

who share this idea agree that the most effective method of overcoming the barrier is dialogue.

Daisaku Ikeda, founder of this university, consistently advocates that dialogue is our greatest weapon for avoiding war and building peace, and has himself actively engaged in dialogue among civilisations, resulting in an expanded global network of 'dialogue experts,' which includes our guest today, Professor Camilleri.

The theme of today's symposium is the *Alliance of Civilisations*, a movement proposed by the Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Zapatero at the 59th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2004, to promote mutual understanding between the Muslim world and the West. It is a sign of the changed times that such an idea could be proposed by Spain, a country which in the Middle Ages purged the Muslim forces from the Iberian peninsula during the *reconquista* (reconquest). The Turkish government has also contributed positively to the movement, and activities look to be steadily progressing in Europe. The First Alliance of Civilizations Forum was held in 2008, and in his annual peace proposal in January the same year, our founder Daisaku Ikeda touched on the significance of this forum.

In the arena of international politics the word 'alliance' primarily meant a military alliance to achieve victory in war. The notion of an alliance of civilisations is thus clever in its application of the word to the concept of building mutually beneficial relationships of a non-military nature, and this notion perhaps goes hand in hand with the trend towards a widening penetration of the idea of 'human security', which goes beyond the narrow confines of 'national security'.

Professor Camilleri too has made a considerable contribution to the UN's *Alliance of Civilizations* initiative, and I hope he will share with us some of his knowledge on how peace in the Asia Pacific region can be created through this initiative.

Today, we are also honored to have a group of distinguished panelists with a wealth of knowledge and experience in a range of fields. Dr. Olivier Urbain, Director of the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, was until two years ago a professor at this university, but has also been involved for several years in promoting the Dialogue Among Civilizations projects at the suggestion of the Toda Institute's founder. Dr. Urbain is to receive a doctorate in Peace Studies from the University of Bradford, UK, for research on the significance of Daisaku Ikeda's peace philosophy in the context of the history of ideas. I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to him on this achievement, and look forward to hearing about his research.

Professor Isao Takagi of Soka University's Faculty of Economics specializes in development economics, and has extensive experience of research in the field, from Southeast Asia to India. As a specialist with deep knowledge of the reality of Asia's diverse societies, Professor Takagi will be discussing the meaning and possibilities of a multicultural society.

Finally, we welcome Mr. Yasukuni Enoki, who has had many years of experience in the international community as a diplomat, first serving as Division Head and Bureau Director in Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, then Minister and Deputy

Chief of Mission, Embassy of Japan in Australia and Consul General in Detroit, the US, as well as serving in the Mission to the EU and as Japan's Ambassador in South Africa and in India. He is therefore familiar with civilisations across all the continents, and I am sure we all look forward to hearing his views, based on a rich and varied career, on the possibilities for regional integration in Asia.

The sponsors of this symposium are delighted to welcome these distinguished panelists, and I am sure we will learn a great deal from their contributions. Once again I would like to thank Professor Camilleri and the other panelists, and everyone here today for attending this symposium.

