

Opening Remarks

by

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Reception for an Exhibition:

From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace: Transforming the Human Spirit

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Mr. Terasaki, Ambassador Yel-chenko, Ms. Susi Snyder, distinguished guests, I am here today really for two purposes. First, I wish to commend the dedicated work, over so many years, of Soka Gakkai International on behalf of disarmament. Your work in this field has been impressive by any standard. Your commitment to this great and honourable goal has been unflinching, even in the face of difficult obstacles. Your work has helped to inspire younger generations to understand the importance of progress in disarmament, especially in eliminating nuclear weapons, the deadliest of all weapons of mass destruction.

The second reason I am here is to support your efforts to promote human security as a fundamental goal of disarmament efforts. Some of us simply take this linkage for granted, and say little more about it. Others ignore human security and instead focus exclusively on states. Neither seems to me to offer the perspective that will be needed to move the multilateral disarmament agenda forward in the years to come, especially with respect to nuclear weapons.

In one way or another, human security pervades the entire UN Charter. The very first words of its Preamble – “We the peoples of the United Nations” – make it clear that the ultimate beneficiaries of the Charter are human beings, both individually and collectively. The Preamble goes on to state that these peoples are determined not just to help *themselves*, but “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”. They also included “disarmament” twice in the Charter as an important means to achieve this goal.

Individuals and groups in civil society have long since worked to advance the goal of human security and to make its connection to disarmament. On 9 July 1955, the famous “Russell-Einstein Manifesto” was issued, which ended with these words, “We appeal as human beings to human beings: Remember your humanity, and forget the rest.”

Then in October 1999, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 53/243, which contained a Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. Of the twelve actions listed in its Programme of Action to promote international peace and security, the first was to “Promote general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, taking into account the priorities established by the United Nations in the field of disarmament.”

I could spend the rest of the evening recounting similar resolutions, declarations, and other multilateral instruments to make my point that disarmament has been, remains, and will no doubt continue to be not just one human security goal, but one of its most important. Achieving this particular goal will facilitate the achievement of many other human security goals – yet it is equally true that failing to achieve disarmament goals can, at worst, jeopardize life on this planet.

So I welcome this new Exhibit on nuclear disarmament and human security and hope that it will inspire representatives attending the current NPT Preparatory Committee session, as well as the general public, to re-dedicate themselves to this great cause.