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Interfaith

Oct 28, 2007

SGI Representatives Attend Interfaith Conference in Macedonia

From October 26-28, 2007, around 300 scholars, activists and religious leaders representing religions and peace organizations from 96 countries gathered in Ohrid, Macedonia, to attend The World Conference on Dialogue Among Religions and Civilizations: "The Contribution of Religion and Culture to Peace, Mutual Respect and Cohabitation" [<http://www.wcdarc-ohrid.org/>]. As a crossroads between cultures, religions and civilizations, Macedonia has hosted numerous international peace conferences and forums in support of the United Nations' call for intercivilizational dialogue. SGI-Europe Chair Hideaki Takahashi and SGI-Europe Vice Chair Frederic Chiba attended the conference representing the Buddhist worldview.

The Macedonia Ministry of Culture organized the event along with the Commission on Relations with the Religious Communities and Groups and various religious communities in Macedonia. The Macedonian government, UNESCO, the World Islamic League and the World Conference of Religions for Peace were event sponsors.



At a reception on October 25, SGI representatives met informally with conference host H.E. Macedonian President Nikola Gruevski and conference chair H.E. Macedonian Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Miloshoski and conveyed a congratulatory message from SGI President Daisaku Ikeda.

President Gruevski was the keynote speaker on the first day. Macedonia cabinet members, representatives from UNESCO and the European Union, and religious leaders from around the world attended.

Two panel discussions took place on the second day. Ohrid Academy of Humanism President and former Macedonian Ambassador to France Mr. Jordan Plevnes moderated the discussions on "Contribution of the Common Values of Different Cultures and Religions to the Future of Mankind." Mr. Ikeda, recipient of the Ohrid Academy of Humanism's World Award of Humanism 2007 in May of this year, sent a message expressing his hopes that the assembly manifesting the collected wisdom of the world's religions, would work to discover solutions to global threats such as armed conflicts, poverty and environmental degradation.

Professor Tamae Manzoku Yagi of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy founded by Mr. Ikeda presented a talk on "The Buddhist View of Peace."

The conference closed with the adoption of a world congress declaration and the formation of the committee for the next conference scheduled for 2010.

[Adapted from an article in the November 3, 2007 issue of the Seikyo Shimbun, Soka Gakkai, Japan]

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