

united nations day

Working a common cause for the common good

Ban Ki-moon
SECRETARY-GENERAL, THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations is needed more than ever at this time of multiple crises. Poverty, disease, terrorism, discrimination and climate change are exacting a heavy toll.

Millions of people continue to suffer deplorable exploitation through bonded labour, human trafficking, sexual slavery or unsafe conditions in factories, fields and mines. The global economy remains an uneven playing field.

The founding of the United Nations was a solemn pledge to the world's people to end such assaults on human dignity, and lead the



way to a better future. There have been painful setbacks, and there is much work ahead to realize the U.N. Charter's vision. But we can take heart from our achievements.

The U.N. Millennium Development Goals have inspired the most successful anti-poverty campaign ever. United Nations treaties addressing inequality, torture and racism have protected people, while other agreements have safeguarded the environment. U.N. peacekeepers have separated hostile forces, our mediators have settled disputes and our humanitarian workers have delivered life-saving aid.

At this critical moment, let us reaffirm our commitment to empowering the marginalized and vulnerable. On United Nations Day, I call on governments and individuals to work in common cause for the common good.

Peace through "Tea diplomacy"

Mayumi Koyama
STAFF WRITER

Building a peaceful world is one of the biggest agendas for human beings, and people are seeking to achieve it in various ways. Sen Genshitsu, the 15th-generation head of the Urasenke way of tea (*chado*), one of Japan's main tea ceremony lineages, is a peace activist who has pleaded for world peace through "Tea diplomacy" for over 50 years.

The 91-year-old Sen is a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, Japan-U.N. Goodwill Ambassador and President of the United Nations Association of Japan. He began traveling overseas to promote peace through the spirit of the way of tea after World War II in which Sen flew as a pilot. With his idea of "peacefulness through a bowl of tea," Sen has made more than three hundred trips abroad and been to more than sixty countries.

On the occasion of the 69th anniversary of the United Nations since the drafting of the U.N. Charter on Oct. 24, 1945, The Japan Times attended a discussion between Sen and Kaoru Nemoto, director at the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), as a representative of the U.N., at the Urasenke Tokyo Branch in Ichigaya, Tokyo on Oct. 15, where the two discussed peace promotion activities in modern society.

On arriving at the venue, each were served a sweet and a bowl of tea, and in this welcoming and calm atmosphere, the discussion started.

Nemoto: You began your peace activity by promoting the spirit of the way of tea around the world long before being appointed Japan-U.N. Goodwill Ambassador. What feelings or passions did you have at that time that motivated you?



Tea talk: Sen Genshitsu (left) and Kaoru Nemoto pose after discussing world peace at the Urasenke Tokyo Branch on Oct. 15. YOSHIKI MIURA

Sen: I fought in the war as a navy special attack corps pilot and most of my friends died, but before I got my orders to fly, Japan lost and the war ended. I returned home feeling regret because I couldn't complete my mission for my country. The GHQ was already in control and thought it important to understand the culture of the occupied country, and so American soldiers were in my home to learn about the way of tea from my father, the 14th-generation Urasenke *iemoto*, or head, Mugensai. I felt unkindly toward the U.S. and those people then, but when I saw those young American fellows trying hard — albeit clumsily — to do something completely unfamiliar as my father instructed them, I realized that culture could go beyond any borders. In the tea room, all are equal, transcending nationalities, positions, everything. Gradually, I got along with those Americans and I became close friends with some.

Thanks to some relationships my family had before the war, I got an opportunity to go to the U.S. and from 1951, I studied at the University of Hawaii and traveled around the states for about two years. Instead of dying for my country, my mission changed to calling for peace through tea.

Nemoto: When you introduce the way of tea as a peaceful activity to a foreign country, what kind of messages do you convey?

Sen: Regardless of nationality, I tell everyone that the round tea bowl represents the earth while the green tea represents nature. The earth and the green of nature are important to human beings, and by making tea, I hope they remember that and feel thankful we can live on this globe, for that hopefully will lead to peace. That is the idea behind peacefulness through a bowl of tea.

At a tea gathering, nobody is allowed to bring weapons or

anything but respect for others. And there is an etiquette to be followed among guests such as saying, "Excuse me for going before you," or "After you," before having tea.

Nemoto: I see, people become equal and humble through tea. You have visited China more than 100 times. What was the reaction of the people to Japan's way of tea?

Sen: When I first visited China in 1979, I saw vice premier Deng Xiaoping and made tea for him. Deng said: "Even though tea is from China, Japan developed the spirit of the way of tea. As we move forward, China needs the spirit of courtesy now, so I want you to return the way of tea to China." Deng's enthusiasm even extended the meeting, and after that event, I started to teach the way of tea all around China.

"Peacefulness through a bowl of tea" is a simple idea, but it has won support from a lot of people throughout the world.



Nemoto: Yes, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also loves tea and your idea. Next year, the U.N. will mark its 70th anniversary. Needless to say, you and your activities are becoming even more important for the U.N.

Sen: Right, the secretary-general told me that he hopes people come to be calm and peaceful through the power of tea. On the occasion of the 70th anniversary next year, I hope I can do something to further promote peace. And I dream to make tea on the border between North and South Korea someday.

Nemoto: The young generation of Japan today has never experienced war. Because of this, the appreciation of both peace and life are fading as compared with the past, and it cannot be said that young people have abundant knowledge about the traditional culture of their own country. Any messages you want to give to them?

Sen: Today, even my grandchildren haven't experienced war so I know it is hard for them to picture it. When I talk to students who come here to learn the way of tea, I tell them to "appreciate the present and try to live it correctly." People tend to live for the future but nobody can see nor expect what will happen next.

There are many manners and rules in the way of tea, but ultimately, the most important thing is to think about others and try offering the best tea to make them happy and relaxed. Every rule and piece of etiquette is for maximizing this hospitality. For the people in front of you, do your best at the moment; this is the way of tea. So I recommend that you make tea at least once a year for your parents, to actually show your gratefulness, for I believe that would lead to a better future.

UNU Rector: The U.N. serves all

David M. Malone
RECTOR, UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY, UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL, THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations was created to help usher in a better world — where people did not suffer from the scourge of war, had their human rights honoured and respected, and were granted the opportunity to live their lives, in the words of the U.N. Charter, "in larger freedom."

Japan has a long and rich history of working with the United Nations in this great task, not least through its support to the United Nations University (UNU) in Tokyo, which I am privileged to lead.

But here in peaceful and prosperous Japan, it sometimes is easy to forget how the world beyond us is changing, and the work of the United Nations is growing. Many people know the United Nations for its work in peacekeeping: helping to stabilize countries that are riven by war. And Japan itself plays a critical role as the second-largest financial contributor to U.N. peacekeeping.

But a series of "non-traditional" security threats are growing, relentlessly, and will challenge the United Nations, and all the countries of the world.

The Ebola crisis, which so far has claimed the lives of over 4000 individuals, was declared a threat to international peace and security by the United Nations Security Council on Sept. 18. Why? In this global, interconnected world, a disease with a long incubation period, and a startlingly high fatality rate, poses a serious threat to the movement of people and goods. A lack of understanding, and of basic protective measures, could lead to unnecessary panic.

The U.N. Security Council has recognized this, and moved swiftly to establish the first-ever U.N. emergency health mission, the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER). Japan has played an important role with its late-

September pledge of \$40 million to support the multilateral response. However, the Secretary-General on Oct. 9 called for a 20-fold surge in resources and assistance.

A longer-term problem, which poses an equal if not greater threat to international peace and security, is climate change. Climate change may lack the unfortunate drama of a hemorrhagic fever, and there have been no international climate change thrillers such as *Contagion*, but the consequences of inaction may be even more catastrophic.

Climate change will bring about profound, global changes in agriculture and water supply. It will produce,

'...there is more that can be done, by individuals, companies and countries alike.'

DAVID M. MALONE

over time, mass movements of population, which can destabilize receiving regions and countries, with unpredictable consequences.

On Sept. 23, the Secretary-General hosted a Climate Summit in New York, to focus the attention of governments, business, finance and civil society on the need for a meaningful, binding agreement at the 2015 Paris Climate Summit.

At this summit, where UNU organized a session focused on the economic case for climate action, over 150 actors (countries, companies, indigenous peoples' organizations and NGOs) committed to halt the destruction of natural forests globally by 2030. But again, there is more that can be done, by individuals, companies and countries alike.

This year, typhoons Vongfong, Phanfone, Neoguri and Halong have all, tragically, caused the loss of life in Japan. Another anticipated consequence of climate change is an increase in se-

vere weather. Japan, the world's fifth largest humanitarian donor, is also supporting the Third U.N. World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction which will take place in March 2015 in Sendai, and will continue to share its skills and experiences in disaster management with the rest of the world, through the United Nations.

Ebola, climate change and natural disasters challenge all of us. Fifty-seven million children around the world continue to be denied access to an education — a most fundamental human right. Gender inequality continues to constrain more than half the world's population. But as the #heforshe campaign has reminded us, this is not just a problem for women to solve. All men have an obligation and an opportunity to make a difference. This simple idea can also help us to tackle the gravest of diseases and the greatest of challenges.

If we transcend our individual differences, recognize our common humanity, and work together, our world and its people will flourish.



Dialogue of Civilizations for World Citizenship

TODA INSTITUTE
for Global Peace and Policy Research

15-3, Samon-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160-0017
Tel.: 81-3-3356-5481 Fax.: 81-3-3356-5482
E-mail: todainst@mb.infoweb.ne.jp

Honolulu Center

1585 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1130, Honolulu, HI 96814, USA
Tel.: 1-808-955-8231 Fax.: 1-808-955-6476
E-mail: toda@toda.org Webpage: http://www.toda.org

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Illustration: Yoshinosuke Matsumoto

The Birth of Amateru (the "Sun Deity" Amaterasu)

Isanagi and Isanami, Japan's ancestral deities, were still without an heir. So they went to the top of Mount Harami (Mount Fuji) and repeatedly worshipped the rising sun. At last, the orb of the sun descended before them, whereupon they were joined in a trance-like union. Many years passed. Finally, in the 96th month, their child was born as the sun rose on the first day of the new year.

Strangely enough, the baby was born in an egg-like form. The elder noble Ohoyamazumi said, "Noble deities are born inside an egg to protect them from evil spirits." Ohoyamazumi broke the egg with a knife made of yew wood, whereupon Amateru safely entered the world.

His aunt, Princess Shirayama, gave him his first bath. Shirayama offered up swaddling clothes she had woven herself, whereupon she heard the baby say, "Ana ureshi" (Such joy!). All were amazed, and pressed her to ask the baby's name. "Uhirugi" was the baby's own reply. U meant 'Great', hi meant the orb of the sun, ru meant spirit, and gi was short for *kine*, a male name-ending. So Amateru's infant name was Uhirugi: Great Sun-Spirit Male.

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Japan Translation Center, Ltd.

7 Kanda Mitoshiro-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0053
Phone: 03-3291-0655 Facsimile: 03-3294-0657
http://www.jtc.co.jp http://www.hotsuma.gr.jp
E-mail: info2@jtc.co.jp

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