

United for a Culture of Peace through Interfaith Harmony

United Nations General Assembly Hall, February 14, 2013

Speech by Masami Saionji, Chairperson of the World Peace Prayer Society / Byakko Shinko Kai

Excellencies, Honorable Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am touched to see so many of you here at the General Assembly Hall. On behalf of the World Peace Prayer Society and Byakko Shinko Kai, it is my great honor to join you today for this special event, "United for a Culture of Peace through Interfaith Harmony."

The United Nations is a microcosm of the world, where leaders of nations assemble to discuss our common future. I wish to express my deepest respect and gratitude to His Excellency, the president of the General Assembly, and the other organizers, for the privilege to support this event at this significant place.

It is with tremendous joy that I introduce this second part of the program, Symphony of Peace Prayers. For more than 50 years, members of Byakko Shinko Kai in Japan, and supporters of the World Peace Prayer Society worldwide, have been praying every day for the peace of the world. Building on these many years of prayers, the first Symphony of Peace Prayers was held in 2005 at Fuji Sanctuary in Japan. This unique ceremony brings together people from different religions and cultures to pray with one voice for peace on earth. It is now celebrated in 52 countries, with a total of over one million participants joining the movement worldwide.

Every religion has its prayer for peace that is equally noble and sacred. We know from our own experience, how beautiful, moving, and magical it is to hear these spoken prayers of different melodies that together create the most wonderful harmony. Our spirits rejoice in oneness, transcending all our differences.

Prayer is love. It is light, power, and the energy for regeneration. Prayer helps awaken the path of divinity within each human being. That is why I had the vision to start the Symphony of Peace Prayers, so that each and every human being can unite in prayer to create a grand symphony together. No matter what religion or faith we believe in, we can come together in the name of peace. The harmony

created by the Symphony of Peace Prayers becomes our expression of respect and gratitude toward one another, touching the deepest part of our soul.

I am so grateful that the spirit of the Symphony of Peace Prayers has been embraced by the UN community. Today, eleven representatives of various religions and spiritual traditions will offer their prayers and readings in the first Symphony of Peace Prayers at the United Nations.

For as long as humanity's thought remains trapped in struggle, discrimination, and religious confrontation, true peace will never come to this world. If we are to create true peace and harmony on earth, we must move beyond dualistic thinking and elevate our consciousness.

The prayers of many faiths that will be offered here at the United Nations shall help us transcend the walls of separation, and bring new inspiration to the global community. I firmly believe that this will be an historic event to open the door to a bright and peaceful future.

In March 2011, Japan was devastated by a great earthquake and tsunami. In that tragic situation, we were greatly supported by the material and humanitarian aid provided by other countries. But more than anything else, we were saved by your prayers. Your prayers helped heal and give us hope. Today, I know many of those people are joining us and sending their prayers from Japan.

Each one of you is a precious existence for creating a world at peace. Let us quiet our minds and send energies of love and healing to the earth, humanity, the seas, the mountains, and all living things. Let us together resonate a magnificent Symphony of Peace Prayers out into the universe.

Thank you, and *May peace prevail on Earth.*