

Presentation speech to Dr. Ikeda

By Hans Jørgen Vodsgaard, General Secretary, Nordic-European Academy
Sept 2006 at Soka university, Tokyo

Honourable president, dear Dr Ikeda, Dear Mrs Ikeda, dear president Masami Wakae, dear members of staff and representatives of the students, dear members of Askov-Ikeda-Study Circle, dear guests of honour.

It is a great honour for me to be present today on this solemn occasion, in these splendid surroundings. On behalf of the board of Directors of the Nordic-European Academy I am proud on this occasion to have the opportunity to renew the ties of friendship between Soka Gakkai International and the Nordic/European Academy with its head office in Askov.

We were very happy and indeed moved by the inauguration address by president Dr Ikeda on the occasion on the opening of the Nordic/European Academy at Askov in October last year.

In his speech dr. Ikeda emphasized that

The fast changes within modern society have provoked an extended debate on education and enlightenment – and their present crisis.... Consequently, fast and effective efforts are needed, where we educate true cosmopolitans and where we take both the positive and the negative aspects of globalisation into account.

This is exactly why I think that society needs your Academy: as a call for an educational revolution.

We, in the new Nordic-European Academy want to contribute to this educational revolution, to the impressive new paradigm that President Dr Ikeda with untiring energy has called for, a new paradigm, which he describes in his book "Soka Education" from 2001 in this way:

"what we need most, is a shift of paradigm from education for the sake of society to a society that serves the fundamental needs of human education"

This great vision for the 21st. century, in our point of view, carries a deep response to the visions of our mentor Grundtvig and his disciples, and we have much to learn from it. Because the Japanese tradition of Soka Gakkai is evidently more conscious of the global challenge than the Nordic Grundtvigian tradition has been, at least so far.

But in fact Grundtvig had a universal view too, even though the tradition has been more national. Grundtvig's view of education was based on two pillars: The School in Soer, whose aim was to help creating a Danish Community culture and a Danish democracy, and the Academy in Gothenburg, whose aim was to help creating a world culture and a world citizen.

In many aspects, the first pillar became a living reality in the Nordic countries, but the second pillar remained an unfulfilled dream. According to Grundtvig, each individual and each people must never forget that they are part of a greater history, the history of mankind.

His idea of a Nordic university in Gothenburg was meant to be a "spiritual workshop" where people, through combined efforts, strive towards everything which is all-embracing and common – towards the universal. This should be done by "adapting and working on all human knowledge according to the interests of life". It seems to us that Dr Ikeda's vision of a value creating education and Grundtvig's vision of learning for life share the same humanistic goals.

We believe that the ideas of Grundtvig and Dr. Ikeda can give inspiration to a new interpretation of the concept of lifelong learning that dominates the global agenda of education. Be-

cause lifelong learning as such does not lead to a better world. Unfortunately knowledge can be used both to destroy life and to secure life. As Grundtvig said

*Then one shall know the difference of sunshine and lightning,
although they both can burn and create clear visions;
For as reason gives, the one light enlivens, the other kills.*

The poem: Now it will be revealed, stanza 9, 1834

Sixty-one years ago, the nuclear bomb became the symbol of the fact that we have now produced enough knowledge to destroy man's possibilities of living on the planet. Today, globalization is an expression of the condition that knowledge has tied the world together in a global, common fate.

Therefore, a global perspective on education is needed. The international community, including the global civil society, has reached the moment of decisive choice.

What the world needs now is not only lifelong learning; it is also learning for life.

Here Soka Gakkai International in its development since the sixties had come much further than the Grundtvigian movement both theoretically and practically - as the leading global NGO-organisation working for peace, culture and education with the perspective of global citizenship.

The Board of directors of the Nordic European Academy knows that the new academy can find much inspiration in the visions of Dr. Ikeda. This was the reason why the board of Directors unanimously decided to ask you, Dr Ikeda, to be a protector of the academy. And we are grateful for having obtained your invaluable support, expressed through the fact that you, president Ikeda, have accepted to take upon yourself the global protection of NEA.

On behalf of the board and our chairman Henning Dochweiler and with a special greeting from former principal of Askov, Hans Henningsen, I hereby have the honour and joy to present you with

this written expression of our gratitude, and this symbolic medal representing the famous works of the great artist of the Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci - as an acknowledgement of your person as a visionary cosmopolitan human being creating a new renaissance of the 21st century.

We, the board of directors of Nordic European Academy, who wish to establish a protectorate with three protectors, - one from the Nordic circle, one from the European circle, and one from the Global circle, who support the vision of the Academy to contribute to humanistic enlightenment and to global citizenship, - hereby acknowledge with joy and gratitude Dr Daisaku Ikeda for representing the Global circle.

Please, Dr Ikeda, accept these tokens of our deep friendship and fruitful cooperation.