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ASAHI WEEKLY NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE: By Soedjatmoko

I am very honoured and delighted to have this opportunity to address this New Year's message to the young men and women who are the readers of the Asahi Weekly.

As we enter the New Year, the ancient dream of a world living in greater peace and harmony burns as brightly as ever -- and perhaps nowhere with such incandescence as here in Japan where the past year saw the incredible outpouring of Japanese peace sentiment in the 40 million signatures affixed to the nuclear disarmament petition.

Keeping this dream alive is most urgent and essential in a world otherwise awash in human folly. The capacity that this planet now possesses for its own self-destruction forces any rational person to consider how the world's many societies can co-exist with one another at lower levels of violence. We cannot go on with the sickening bloodshed -- by one culture, creed, sect, race, nationality or ideology against one another -- that we read about in our daily headlines. We simply must find better ways to organize and arrange the intricate web of systems and structures that regulate human affairs -- to dampen the impulse for war and solution by force and stress the overwhelming logic of peace.

There are many symptoms of the current global crisis, but certainly one of the most severe is the virtual chaos on the international economic scene. Certain components of this problem are familiar, involving questions of trade, money and finance, or investment. Less apparent, but equally crucial to our understanding of the global economic disorder, are

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such issues as the vast migration flows that are transforming both city and countryside, the impact of computerization and robotization on unemployment, the uneven distribution of the world's resources, or shifting power configurations.

In addition to these problems which are now very much upon us, there are other new problems around the corner which are likely to confront and trouble our advance into the 21st century. Even if we are able to overcome the present global recession in the next few years, it is only realistic to assume that the wealthy industrialized countries will probably have a low rate of economic growth for a long time to come -- a return to the boom years of the 1960s and early 1970s seems simply not in the cards. With this slow growth will go continuing high levels of unemployment. The International Labour Organization estimates that one billion new jobs will have to be created by the year 2000.

Another problem lying ahead is the consequence of the aging of populations -- the so-called "graying of society." Life expectancy in many of the industrialized countries is expected to reach 80 years by the beginning of the next century. Here in Japan, it has been calculated that such a life span will include a quarter of a million hours that will not be needed by biological functions, for schooling, or for work. This raises new questions about how to use those hours, and the cultural and social adjustments that we are bound to have to make.

These are some of the challenges that are likely to increase in intensity as we move toward the 21st century. At the United Nations University, we have been engaged recently in placing more of these challenges on our agenda to make our work more responsive to a world

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crisis which the Secretary-General of the United Nations has very rightly said is threatening to develop into a trend toward international anarchy.

In this broadening of our activities, we find ourselves confronted with a number of interlinked questions:

How, for example, can we make innovations in science and technology that will stimulate employment and opportunities for dignifying work? How can we grow economically and still live in harmony with nature? How can security needs -- in a world torn by violence, militarization and the threat of nuclear war -- be reconciled with the imperatives of individual human freedom.

One thing that our work continues to make absolutely clear is that we will all have to meet these challenges together. In this increasingly interdependent world, where decisions made on one side of the globe can ripple so swiftly over the lives of people on the other side, no nation can set its course alone. All societies, the strong and the weak, are now exposed to many forces and processes beyond their control, and all national boundaries have become permeable to the transnational impact of economic and political decisions taken somewhere outside one's own country.

In such circumstances, it seems that this New Year's is an appropriate occasion to remind young people that there is one form of power which might help lead us out of our present turmoil, drift and fragmentation and onto a road into a 21st century promising more hope, harmony and dignity. That is the power of the mind -- the enhancement of our intellectual capacity to reason, to understand and relate to other cultures. To love our fellow members of the human race for the oneness we all share

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through all our diversities and clashing aspirations, the essential humanity in all of us. Either we learn to love each other, Barbara Ward said, or we will all perish.

It is to the young people of Japan and around the world that we look for the development of this capacity of love and empathy with your fellow human beings -- for yours are still the open minds not yet fixed by the rigidities of ancient ideologies, convictions or hates.

If you could achieve this, you could be the harbingers of a future world that knows far more harmony, justice and sanity than the present one. The world is becoming an increasingly crowded, complex and fragile place -- a very small island. People who live on small, crowded islands -- or in conditions of extreme population density as here in Japan -- have learned that continued resort to violence and domination over one's neighbours is foolish. When one exists in such circumstances, people's lives collide and rub and jostle against each other too much for a continuing state of conflict and tension to be bearable. Living on our small global island, with its growing billions of people, we will have to learn a great deal more about managing tensions and social harmony.

This imposes on the younger generation a learning task that really leads in two directions. One is the enhancement of your sensitivity to others -- whatever their differing ideas, beliefs or values. The second is to do this while retaining your own sense of self -- that inner core of strength that the poet Yoshida Kenko called "The blossoms of the heart no wind can touch." As we enter this New Year, it is my sincere wish that those blossoms will continue to flower in all your hearts.

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