

United Nations Day special

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Honoring firm commitment to peace

ANTONIO GUTERRES
SECRETARY-GENERAL, THE UNITED NATIONS

United Nations Day marks the birthday of our founding Charter — the landmark document that embodies the hopes, dreams and aspirations of “we the peoples.”

Every day, the women and men of the United Nations work to give practical meaning to that Charter.

Despite the odds and the obstacles, we never give up.

Extreme poverty is being reduced, but we see inequality growing.

Yet we don't give up because we know by reducing inequality, we increase hope and opportunity and peace around the world.

Climate change is moving faster than we are, but we don't give up because we know that climate action is the only path.

Human rights are being violated in so many places. But we don't give up because we know respect for human rights and human dignity is a basic condition for peace.

Conflicts are multiplying — people are suffering. But we don't give up because we know every man, woman and child deserves a life of peace.

On United Nations Day, let us reaffirm our commitment.

To repair broken trust.

To heal our planet.

To leave no one behind.

To uphold dignity for one and all, as united nations.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres
UN PHOTO/ MARK GARTEN



Comedians boost SDGs awareness

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“Why did an entertainment company such as Yoshimoto decide to become involved in promoting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?” asked U.N. Information Centre Director Kaoru Nemoto when she recently reunited with Akihiko Okamoto, COO of renowned Japanese entertainment company Yoshimoto Kogyo Co. (Yoshimoto).

In August, Nemoto and Okamoto attended the 67th U.N. DPI/NGO Conference held at the U.N. headquarters in New York together to share their SDGs promotional projects, which was warmly received by the global audience. With 106 years of history, Yoshimoto manages around 6,000 performers, including comedians and actors. The following is a summary of their dialogue.

Nemoto: First of all, what inspired you to collaborate on SDGs when I approached your company two years ago?

Okamoto: In 2011, we started a regional revitalization initiative, the Living in Your Town Project, in all 47 prefectures, where our comedians living in rural areas worked together with their communities to promote and resolve local issues. SDGs seemed to smoothly fit with this project. Initially, I didn't think we could be involved in so many initiatives with so many partners. Since we knew nothing about SDGs, you gave a lecture to our employees and performers at our SDGs kick-off seminar.

Nemoto: Your employees and performers incorporated SDGs into their work and helped spread the idea among the general public. How does this fall into your business model?

Okamoto: After learning about SDGs, rather than starting something completely new, our staff was able to find a connection between 17 goals of the SDGs and what they were currently working on, such as local projects at the prefectural level. They also realized there is still a lot more to be done on a daily basis.



Yoshimoto Kogyo Co. COO Akihiko Okamoto (right) and U.N. Information Centre Director Kaoru Nemoto discussed the Sustainable Development Goals collaboration at Yoshimoto's Tokyo headquarters in Shinjuku Ward.
YOSHIAKI MIURA

Nemoto: Aside from such collaboration, Yoshimoto's partnership agreement to promote SDGs with the town of Shimokawa in Hokkaido, which received the Prime Minister's Award of the Japan SDGs Award, is a perfect example of bringing people together.

Okamoto: We exchanged business cards at the Japan SDGs Award Conferment Ceremony where Yoshimoto was also awarded the Partnership Award, and Shimokawa approached us with a business idea to work together. Since Yoshimoto announced the collaboration with SDGs, many local governments and companies have approached us with an interest to collaborate. Others have asked us to help in delivering their messages.

Nemoto: At the U.N. DPI/NGO Conference in New York, Yoshimoto presented SDGs' promotional initiatives at the Open Forum Solutions for SDGs Advocacy and Action, where over 700 attendees filled the room.

Okamoto: That was an amazing conference. Yoshimoto shared a video of our initiatives covering the Okinawa International Movie Festival under the theme of “Laugh and Peace,” which is a great example of incorporating SDGs. Our comedians walked on the red carpet on Naha's main street holding placards bearing the 17 SDGs. A “stamp rally,” in which children collected ink stamps of their favorite comedians allowed them to learn

about SDGs. We used the power of entertainment to pursue SDGs. I saw someone in the audience in tears, deeply moved by our video.

Nemoto: The presentation received huge applause. In U.N. conferences, we tend to use technical terms that can be hard to understand for the general public — this is where the entertainment industry, represented by entities such as Yoshimoto, can act as an interpreter, to clearly deliver the SDGs' message and connect with people.

Okamoto: The audience really liked our “Those Who Started to Think About SDGs” promotional video clips that were produced to increase awareness of 17 goals and featured Yoshimoto's comedians. They thought the clips were hilarious. We should send them to the Cannes Lions awards next year.

Nemoto: After the presentation, many people rushed to congratulate you and exchange business cards; the response was phenomenal. Based on this positive feedback, how do you plan to expand your initiatives moving forward?

Okamoto: We would like to take our current SDGs activities to Asia since we already have comedians living in Asian countries. Also, as our next step, we should select and focus on certain goals from the 17 SDGs to clearly communicate each one of them.

Nemoto: U.N. Information Centres in other Asian countries may well be interested in collaboration. In regards to focusing on certain goals, for example, comedian Naoki Tanaka of the comedy duo Cocorico is the goodwill ambassador of the Sustainable Seafood Campaign related to Goal 14. So some goals are starting to stand out.

Okamoto: From that perspective, festivals that Yoshimoto participates in, such as the Okinawa International Movie Festival and the Kyoto International Film and Art Festival, can be used as a platform. Perhaps we can specialize or focus on areas according to each comedian's personality and unique traits. Our comedians can deliver SDGs' messages through laughter, which is an effective communication tool to increase awareness of SDGs.

Japan as a model U.N. member state

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The United Nations of 2018 exists in a world that is more interconnected than ever before. Countries are no longer insulated from the setbacks and challenges of other nations, and all profit in some way from each other's innovation and success.

Global paths to shared progress, however, seem increasingly elusive among bitter social divides and growing inequality. Our success in overcoming these and other barriers to sustainable development will hinge on our response to two of the greatest challenges of our time — climate change and conflict.

This month's U.N. report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is the starkest call yet for immediate and dramatic international efforts to avoid the catastrophic impacts of global temperature rise. From Bangladesh to the Caribbean, the tolls and tides from climate change are rising. The average global temperature over the past five years is the highest on record, and the 2017 North Atlantic hurricane season was the costliest ever recorded, pushing that year's global economic losses attributed to disasters to over \$300 billion.

Following years of U.N.-supported success improving nutrition worldwide, the number of undernourished people rose by 38 million between 2015 to 2016. This increase is largely the result of conflicts, drought and disasters linked to climate change.

Reversing these trends is at the forefront of U.N. efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieve its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Progress on the SDGs in some areas has been slower than necessary. But as part of his efforts to revitalize and refocus the work of the U.N., Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has also launched reform initiatives to reposition the U.N. development system to more effectively deliver on the 2030 Agenda.

As Rector of the United Nations University (UNU) — the U.N.'s principal research

arm — I am committed to ensuring that our research responds to changing U.N. needs and contributes to the vast evidence base so crucial to achieving the SDGs.

UNU's work would be impossible without the government of Japan's support, both as a gracious host for our headquarters in Tokyo and as a provider of vital financial backing.

This year, as we celebrate 73 years since the U.N. was established, Japan also commemorates 73 years since two of its darkest days — the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In August, I joined the secretary-general during his trip to Nagasaki for the 73rd Peace Memorial Ceremony. The visit and attendance at the ceremony — a first for a secretary-general — was a valued opportunity to meet with atomic bomb survivors, pay respects to those who died and celebrate the resilience of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

Regrettably, the shadow of nuclear weapons continues to grow as states modernize

their arsenals. Global spending on arms and armies is now 80 times the budget needed for worldwide humanitarian aid. Ironically, this aid is often necessitated by conflict.

As an organization that is known for its work in peacekeeping and helping to stabilize countries riven by war, the U.N. is responding with a renewed commitment to disarmament and nonproliferation. Following the launch of the secretary-general's new disarmament agenda in May, the August visit to Nagasaki was a chance to spotlight and learn from Japan's experiences and its leadership on nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation.

Sustainable development is impossible without peace. I warmly commend Japan for its peacekeeping efforts, and its humanitarian response and steady role in global governance. Japan's leadership and dedication to the U.N. is a model for other U.N. member states in meeting the rapidly evolving demands for change in the coming decades.

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Building stable peace and working for a just, nonviolent, inclusive and sustainable world



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Yamatotake's Eastern Expedition: The Pacification of the Yemishi

Soon after Prince Yamatotake returned from his defeat of the Kumasotakeru, news arrived of a Yemishi uprising in the east. This time, Mochihito, Yamatotake's elder brother, was expected to lead the army, but he became terrified and fled. So Yamatotake spoke: “Now my tired troops must again do battle. But we shall win peace!”

The sovereign handed his country's symbol, a halberd, to his son. Yamatotake accepted it with solemn dignity and left for the expedition.

On his way, Yamatotake visited and took leave of the Priestess Yamatohime. She handed him a charm passed down by their ancestor and the noble sword Murakumo with which Sosanowo conquered the Land of Izumo.

Yamatotake successfully quelled the revolt. And on his way back, he built a Grand Shrine to venerate Sosanowo (Hikawa Jinja, Saitama).



Illustration: Yoshinosuke Matsumoto



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