Dear WOMPers:

I regret that I am physically unable to go all the way to New York to participate in the WOMP review meeting. I truly hope you will have a stimulating, productive dialog.

For reasons unknown to me, the Super-Chairman appointed me “co-director”, which is obviously a misnomer. Saul, Richard, Rajni and Ali have been the major driving force of the first generation WOMP, and I learnt quite a lot from them. I thank them for the enormous intellectual impact they brought to bear on me.

In his recent email, Saul asked me three questions: 1. Whether do I think that WOMP should continue; 2. What are major global issues; and 3. My reactions, if any, to Richard’s statement.

As for 1, I think that, the period when WOMP devoted most of its energy to creative discourse coincided with the Cold War. It was the time when we were uncertain whether the nuclear annihilation of humankind would occur, by miscalculation or by accident, but we had a clear concept of the global structure of the bipolar conflict. Now, it is precisely the structure of global society that is undergoing an unprecedented change which makes us deeply uncertain and calls for an innovative value-oriented intellectual exercise like a “WOMP 2”. At the same time, a number of transnational projects are dealing with the global problematique from a perspective similar to WOMP and therefore the question, to me, is not so much whether “WOMP” should continue as how to link anew with the networks of concerned intellectual activists, globally and/or regionally. Personally, I prefer to leave the matter in the hands of younger generations.

As for 2, I think that one issue, which we can identify with certainty, is the irreversible trend toward globalization. It consists of two contradictory trends: the globalization of exclusionary competition and the globalization of inclusive solidarity. In my view, the task of primary importance for us is to envision the way to strengthen the latter.

This would call for a radical reexamination of what “development” means. Neo-liberal competitive capitalism is widening the gap between the rich and poor, globally, regionally, nationally, and locally. China follows the suit of “authoritarian developmentalism”, similar to Asian “NICs”. India or Brazil has not succeeded in presenting an alternative. With its population of 1.3 billion, China is exploiting and enclosing the resources in Africa and South America. With the estimated world population of 9.1 billion in 2050, it is unlikely that the supply of food and clean water is...
assured.

Under the condition of increasing global resource depletion, we will have to reexamine what “freedom” should mean. Both liberalism and Marxism are based on the assumption that human beings will enjoy freedom when liberated from economic or material constraints. If so, what will happen when essential global resources are depleted. Time will come in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century when the concept of “freedom” should be redefined in terms of inclusive solidarity. If we fail to do so, we will be engaged in the aggravation of the harsh struggle for survival with no end in sight.

This danger will get worse as a result of the increasing proliferation of nuclear technology, even if under the guise of CO2 reduction and trade expansion. The spread of nuclear technology will facilitate its “military conversion”. Even if a suicidal nuclear war is restrained, the chances of “conventional war” will increase if fought by robots.

Further, the exclusionary rivalry will apply not only to state-to-state power relations but also state’s “war on terror” which infringes on human rights of its own citizens by surveillance. It also generates tension and discrimination against immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities.

What we have to overcome is not only oppressive force and inequitable profiteering but also people’s indifference and lack of empathy toward the other. Quite often, indifference is more difficult to cope with than explicit opposition. It is clear that consciousness-raising is the precondition for inclusive solidarity. In reality, contemporary citizens have the historic advantage of gaining awareness on a daily basis how people suffer and struggle in Africa, the Middle East, the Americas, and any other parts of the world.

As for 3, I largely agree with what Richard says. As I said above, global “uncertainty” seems to be a major point of departure as well as an unprecedented challenge to us. The world is changing and it provides us with opportunities.

Last November, I went to a Sino-Korea-Japan symposium in Seoul on the invitation of the East Asia Peace Forum to give a keynote speech. (This will be my last trip to participate in an international conference abroad.) There were about 30 participants from China, consisting of researchers and activists of NGOs. What was very interesting for me was the fact that they spoke on an explicit premise that “civil society” exists autonomous from the State. In fact, one of the major topics was, “Transcending the Nation-State in East Asia in the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century.”

Yoshi Sakamoto