

**Sukyo Mahikari Centers for Spiritual Development is a nonprofit spiritual and community service organization**, with international headquarters in Takayama, Japan, and regional headquarters in Australia-Oceania, Asia, Europe, Africa, Latin America, and North America. There are 1300 Centers for Spiritual Development throughout the world. Sukyo Mahikari's membership of one million practitioners around the world represents diverse fields, including the sciences, medicine, education, and the arts and humanities. Two former prime ministers of Japan, and the current Prime Minister Abe are practitioners of Sukyo Mahikari, as are six of his current cabinet members and more than 150 members of Japan's Parliament of various political parties. International dignitaries, including ambassadors, politicians, professors, and artists, regularly participate in Sukyo Mahikari activities. Sukyo Mahikari has special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and is an affiliate of the United Religions Initiative (URI) of North America.

Sukyo Mahikari was founded by Kotama Okada on February 27, 1959 and is a contemporary emergence of the oldest spiritual tradition of Japan: Ancient Shinto. Its primary fundamental tenet is: The origin of the world is one, the origin of all human beings is one, and the origin of all religions is one. Its vision is to work with others to help create a peaceful, just and sustainable world.

Sukyo Mahikari is devoted to being active in efforts across the globe to protect and preserve the environment. Its practitioners are active in community environmental activities and in greening their communities. They have planted trees in Atlanta and Chicago, and have joined "Million Trees" programs in New York and Los Angeles. They regularly participate in Green Expos featuring green businesses, environmental organizations, and related groups. Sukyo Mahikari centers join annually in global climate awareness activities in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme's World Environment Day and Climate Week NYC. The international headquarters of Sukyo Mahikari has acquired some forested areas in the prefecture of Japan where it is located and has worked with government leaders in that area to build hydroelectric power plants to supply renewable energy to its own facilities and to the city and prefecture. This is being done in conjunction with planning for sustainable forest management and biomass power generation, with the goal of being able to harness the natural resources of light, water, and forests to promote self-sufficiency in the power supply.

In Europe, wood and other debris needed to be cleared to allow the survival of the reed beds on the banks of Lake Geneva and the Rhone River. Sukyo Mahikari practitioners, joining with a conservation group, cleared a mass of debris from those wetlands. Other young practitioners in Switzerland joined with townspeople and other volunteers to clear litter from streams and forests. In Australia, Sukyo Mahikari practitioners participate in the annual Cleanup Australia Day which takes place across the continent. In other countries, while offering direct assistance, Sukyo Mahikari practitioners also share skills, so that any immediate improvements in the environment can be maintained and built upon.

In Africa, Sukyo Mahikari works with national governments to assist in reforestation efforts to reverse desertification and revitalize the environment by planting trees, including the "Great Green Wall" project to create a three-mile-wide band of trees from Africa's Atlantic Coast all the way to Eastern Africa on the Red Sea. In Angola, Sukyo Mahikari members are

arranging activities for children orphaned by the civil war, for elderly people, and to beautify urban areas. In a time when education is a prerequisite to building a prosperous future, Sukyo Mahikari has built an elementary school in Angola.

Sukyo Mahikari's environmental cleanup activities have been well received by communities. Mayor Mufi Hannemann of Honolulu presented Sukyo Mahikari with a certificate declaring September 27 to be "Sukyo Mahikari Day" in Honolulu in recognition of beach and park cleanup activities there over the past ten years. Los Angeles Mayor James Hahn presented Sukyo Mahikari of North America with a resolution commending the organization for its efforts in helping to create a peaceful and harmonious society.

On October 14, 2014, both the city and state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, formally designated February 27 of each year as Sukyo Mahikari Day, and in August 2013, both the city and state of São Paulo, Brazil, did the same. In 1992, Sukyo Mahikari was officially recognized by the government of Angola. The President of Angola, Mr. José Eduardo dos Santos, as well as Angola's Ministries of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport; the Family; and the Promotion of Women, have expressed admiration for the efforts of Sukyo Mahikari members in Angola to help rebuild the country.

In 2000, Sukyo Mahikari co-sponsored the UN Millennium Summit of World Religious Leaders, and in October 2014 Sukyo Mahikari, as a UN non-governmental organization (NGO), received the Spirit of the United Nations Award as a UN non-governmental organization (NGO) for its long-time contributions to the UN's efforts through giving talks, participating in collaborations to promote the combining of disparate points of view to promote peace for all humankind and to allow the finest levels of humanity to shine.

Sukyo Mahikari Centers for Spiritual Development was invited to participate in the 2009 High-Level Consultation on Climate Change sponsored by the Global Campaign for Climate Action and the World Conference of Religions for Peace, the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition. In 2014, Sukyo Mahikari participated in the Religions for the Earth conference with more than 200 other spiritual organizations to address the ethical and moral correlates of the political negotiations toward a just climate treaty and new measures within nations, regions, and cultures necessary to support it.

Sukyo Mahikari also holds international and regional conferences with scientists, medical professionals, educators, and theologians. In 2005, the Yoko Civilization Research Institute, affiliated with Sukyo Mahikari, held its fourth international conference in Japan on biomedicine and ecology, with the theme: "Life and the Environment." Its aim was to seek answers to current global predicaments through discussions by experts in diverse fields focused on expanding the framework beyond the polarization of science and spirituality. A book of essays from this conference, *The Meaning of Life in the 21st Century*, was published in August 2009. In February 2008, Sukyo Mahikari Centers for Spiritual Development sponsored "Greening Your Life," a conference in Torrance, California, with speakers including a former assistant secretary-general of the United Nations and the research director of a leading institute for organic agriculture. In June 2008, Sukyo Mahikari sponsored a conference titled "Life and the Environment" in São Paulo, Brazil.

In April 1999, Sukyo Mahikari opened the Hikaru Museum in Japan, featuring displays on the history of civilizations, natural history, food and the environment, and rotating art exhibits. A Hokusai print from the museum's collection was sent on loan to the Smithsonian Museum's Sackler Gallery in Washington, D.C. for display.

The latest Sukyo Mahikari Center for Spiritual Development in the US opened in midtown Manhattan at 124 East 31st Street, on February 2, 2010. The new center showcases innovative green design strategies that are new to both New York City and the State of New York. The center has quickly become part of the New York community, hosting events by the Institute for International Social Development, the Center for Non-violent Communication, Climate Week NYC, and a conference on "urban agriculture" organized by the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce.

The center received LEED Silver Certification by the U.S. Green Building Council, becoming one of a handful of buildings in New York City to have achieved this status. The center is only the 10th LEED-certified New Construction Building in New York City. Sukyo Mahikari Centers for Spiritual Development also received recognition from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) for this high-performance building, which exceeds New York City and State energy efficiency codes.

Mr. Kohoh Okada, the spiritual leader of Sukyo Mahikari, was born in Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan, in October 1947. He graduated from Kokugakuin University in March 1970 with a major in Shinto archeology. After graduating, he joined the staff of Sukyo Mahikari while also commencing his formal training in the art of calligraphy under his late father, Yuhkei Teshima, a renowned master calligrapher and designated Person of Cultural Merit by the Japanese government, and is now, under his pen name, Tairiku Teshima, an internationally renowned calligrapher as well. In September 1975, he accompanied his father to Europe as a member of the Cultural Ambassadors of Calligraphy sent by the Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is a member of the Kamakura Calligraphy Association since 1971; President of the Magatama Calligraphy Association since 1978; and in 1987, he was appointed to the Board of Advisors for the Association of Independent Calligraphers. In 1999 he received the Poet Ikuya Kato Award. In 2003, Mr. Okada became a member of the International Art Council, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Hikaru Museum, and Guest Professor of the Department of Fine Arts of Shanghai University. In 2006, Mr. Okada received the Paris Picasso Museum Award for his artwork "Sui." In 2006, he was also asked to become a consultant for the Sankei Newspaper Calligraphy Association. In 1990, Mr. Okada had an audience with Pope John Paul II and presented him with one of the artworks of Yuhkei Teshima. Most recently, in 2013, Mr. Okada had exhibitions of his calligraphic work in London and Paris, and in 2014 in New York City. In 2015, Mr. Okada was appointed by the Agency of Cultural Affairs (Japanese government) to become a member of the Religious Juridical Persons Council.

Mr. Okada has visited Australia, Central and South America, Europe, Africa, the Asian continent, and gave an address at the United Nations when he visited North America in 2006.