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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Campaign for a “Stress-Free, Violence-Free America” Launched at the Art of Living Foundation’s Gala Silver Jubilee Celebration at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts

Wednesday, March 28, 2007, Washington, DC: People from all walks of life gathered tonight at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., to celebrate 25 years of service to society by the Art of Living Foundation and its founder His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, world-renowned spiritual leader. The theme of this gala event was “Creating a Stress-Free, Violence-Free America.” The illustrious gathering included many prominent members of Congress, senators, educators, professionals, scientists and business leaders, who came to acknowledge and honor the work of the Foundation and its founder.

Event organizers were struggling up until the last few minutes to accommodate the overwhelming response from embassies, congressional leaders and other dignitaries seeking tickets at the last minute. The Foundation unfortunately had to turn down a great many of these requests, as the hall was at capacity.

A number of prominent members of Congress addressed the gathering, praising the work of the Foundation and its founder, including Sen. Joseph R. Biden, Jr., D-Delaware; Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Illinois; Rep. Joe Wilson, R-South Carolina; Rep. Danny Davis, D-Illinois; Sen. Joseph Crowley, D-New York; and Rep. Luis Gutierrez, D-Illinois. Also on stage with Sri Sri were a number of ambassadors, judges and prominent business leaders.

Senator Biden stated, “The Art of Living Foundation is one of India’s stars. It has an incredible following that cuts through all religions, cultures and background – a very, very difficult thing to do in today’s world. If there’s anything we need more of today, it’s tolerance.” Senator Biden praised the Foundation in particular for its important work promoting peace, combating drug addiction, and empowering youth.

Floyd “Shad” Meshad, president and founder of the National Veterans Foundation, presented Sri Sri with an award honoring his outstanding service to returning veterans and their families. Meshad, who recently participated in Sri Sri’s “Project Welcome Home Troops” Course, said, “Anything we can do to bring our troops peace of mind, and lets them come back and reintegrate into society, is worth its weight in gold.”

His Excellency Vijay K. Nambiar, Chief of Staff to the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, addressed the gathering, bringing a message on behalf of the Secretary-General. In his message, Ban Ki-Moon

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stated, “It is reassuring to know that you – a diverse assembly of origins and cultures – have gathered to celebrate your commitment to global harmony and peaceful coexistence. The values you champion, including non-violence, compassion and the sanctity of all life, go to the heart of what the United Nations stands for.”

A highlight of the evening was the formal unveiling of Sri Sri’s proposed *Universal Declaration of Human Values*. This Declaration provides a pragmatic vision for the world community, representing a roadmap to foster understanding and harmonious coexistence among different peoples and cultures. Drafted in the form of a proposed resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, this Declaration emphasizes the urgent need to rekindle human values in society in order to resolve the serious challenges facing the world today.

In reflecting on the achievements of the past 25 years, Sri Sri also indicated a direction for the future. “We all can work toward a dual goal,” he stated. “One is to protect our environment; the second is to protect human values – compassion, friendliness, cooperation, and a sense of belonging to each other. This will protect our minds, our hearts – the soul of the planet. These human values need to be nurtured so we can have a stress-free, violence-free society.”

Two special proclamations were made in honor of this event: March 28, 2007, was proclaimed “Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Day in Washington, D.C.,” and March 25-30, 2007, was proclaimed “Human Values Week in Washington, D.C.”

Over 72 schools in the United States have participated in Sri Sri’s programs for youth, including the YES! program (Youth Empowerment Seminar). A number of students who participated in these programs addressed the evening’s gathering, sharing their inspiring experiences. One youth stated, “The YES! course was powerful for me. I started to see my life in a new way, and I began to see the world around me in a completely new perspective.”

Sri Sri concluded the program with a powerful guided meditation, followed by both Indian and Western music.

More than one thousand dignitaries and prominent leaders in government, business, science, and education also attended a private reception with Sri Sri at the Kennedy Center just prior to the event.

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