

Statement by the delegate from Japan (Item 5)

1. Japan is working to establish comprehensive policies to ensure respect for the human rights of the Ainu people, an indigenous people living in the northern part of the country, especially in Hokkaido. In 2008, responding to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Japanese Diet unanimously adopted resolutions that require the government to recognize the Ainu people as an indigenous people and to establish comprehensive policy measures for them. Taking seriously the UN Declaration and the Diet's resolution, the Government of Japan set up a high-level advisory panel with the participation of a representative of the Ainu people. After one year of deliberations with reference to the UN Declaration, the panel completed its report in July 2009, recommending the basic principles and a wide range of measures for future Ainu policy, including education and cultural policies.
2. Based on that report, the Government of Japan set up, in December 2009, the Council for Ainu Policy Promotion hosted by the Chief Cabinet Secretary. The establishment of this Council was Japan's first initiative to seek active participation of an indigenous people in its official policymaking process. With the participation of several Ainu representatives, the Council discussed comprehensive and effective policy measures for the Ainu people, in order to realize various recommendations by the former advisory panel.
3. Among the recommendations, the Council delegated two major projects to its ad-hoc working groups. The first was the development of a "Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony," a project to establish a national center to revitalize and foster respect for the way of life and the culture of the Ainu people. As a museum surrounded by a rich natural environment, the Symbolic Space is expected to function as a national and international hub for education, research and exhibitions on Ainu culture. Particularly, the Symbolic Space is expected to significantly contribute to passing the cultural heritage of the Ainu people on to the next generation. The working group of the Council has just finalized its consideration of the basic concepts of the Space, based on which the Government of Japan will make every effort, with stakeholders, to realize this unique attempt to promote a harmonious society.
4. The second project has been to research living conditions of the Ainu people outside Hokkaido. It was the first time for the country to conduct such nationwide research. Since the working group of the Council has just compiled

the results, the Government of Japan will analyze them and will consider necessary policy measures for the Ainu people across the country.

5. In this way, Japan is working and will work, together with the Ainu people and with reference to the UN Declaration, to realize a wide range of recommended policy measures, in line with the current conditions of the Ainu people as well as those throughout the nation, in order to achieve a society that respects the diversity of all people.

(end)