

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)

Item 7: United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
The Role of Parliaments in the Implementation of the Declaration

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Statement by the Government of Japan

Geneva

10 July 2014

Mr. Chair,

We have the honor to address the EMRIP and share our national experience after the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the role our national parliament has played in this regard. Japan has an indigenous population known as “Ainu” living in the northern part of the country, especially on the northern island of Hokkaido. According to a survey in 2006, around 24,000 Ainu people live in Hokkaido.

In 2008, after the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, it was the Diet of Japan that took the lead on this issue and unanimously adopted resolutions calling for the recognition of the Ainu people as indigenous people and the establishment of comprehensive policies for them. Responding to these resolutions, the Government recognized that the Ainu people are an indigenous people with a unique language as well as religious and cultural distinctiveness.

The Government of Japan established “the Council for Ainu Policy Promotion” in 2009, which is hosted by the Chief Cabinet Secretary and is composed of 14 members, including several Ainu representatives, where regular consultations have taken place since its inception in order to ensure that the views of the Ainu people are reflected in the relevant policy-making process. As a result, various legislative and policy measures have been in place to protect Ainu culture including their language and to address challenges they have faced in education and employment.

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One of the examples of these efforts is to establish a set of facilities dedicated to the Ainu history and culture, called the Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony, which is scheduled to be established in Hokkaido before the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. The Symbolic Space, to be composed of a national museum of Ainu culture and national park of ethnic co-existence, will play a key role in the revitalization and transmission of Ainu culture including through exhibitions of and Ainu culture and history as well as providing people with space for interaction.

Mr. Chair,

Japan continues to strive to achieve a society in which the diversity of all people is respected including that of Ainu people. Furthermore, Japan is also committed to making efforts to tackle issues faced by indigenous peoples both at the national and international levels, in cooperation with the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders in the international community.

I thank you for your attention.