

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
United Nations Headquarters
New York
7 to 18 May, 2012

Ainu Association of Hokkaido
Yupo Abe

Thank you, Mr/Madame chairperson.

I would like to call your attention to the very critical issue in regard to the side readings entitled "Ainu Peoples – History and Present Situation" for elementary and junior high school students. It is over the crucial issue of historical recognition whether Hokkaido, the traditional territory of Ainu people, was annexed by the Government of Japan without any consent of indigenous peoples, which is essential in implementing the article 28 of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Since 2001, the side readings have regularly been published and distributed to children of elementary and junior high schools in Hokkaido. Until then, history textbooks authorized by the government did not sufficiently mention about the true history of Hokkaido, that is, "Before the occupation by Japan, the island was for and of Ainu indigenous peoples, our ancestors. In the modern period, the government increasingly sent Japanese people to Hokkaido, prohibited Ainu people to practice their own culture and tradition, and took away their livelihood in hunting and harvesting."

After eleven years of publication of the side readings, today we face the very serious political intervention into the school education. Recently, some members of Hokkaido prefectural assembly criticized the side readings during the session by saying that several descriptions are based on misinterpretation of facts. March this year, some Diet members of Liberal Democratic Party also raised the question to the descriptions in the side readings.

With these questions, the Ainu Cultural Promotion and Research Foundation, the publisher of the side readings, has decided to review the contents and make a revised edition. In the revised edition, several contents were revised without any consent of or consultation with Ainu people. The most crucial revise is the deletion of the following

part: "in 1869, the Government of Japan decided to rename the island 'Hokkaido' and annexed to Japan unilaterally without any consent of Ainu people. Because of this, the Foundation has been delaying the publication for this school year starting in April.

The Hokkaido Local Government as well as the Japanese Government do not take a clear position in answering to the questions raised by these politicians during the sessions, which is in clear violation of article 8 of the UNDRIP prohibiting forced assimilation and deprivation of their land and territories. The authorities should have a clear policy based on the "UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" which the Government of Japan has supported before the international community. They should also remember that the Diet has adopted the resolution calling for the recognition of the Ainu as indigenous peoples of Japan.

I strongly protest against the political intervention into the education in an attempt to distort the history. In this regard, I would like call for the Permanent Forum to urge the Government of Japan to conduct the following:

Recommendations:

1. We strongly urge the Government of Japan to come back to the starting lines with the UNDRIP and Diet resolution to restore the true historical descriptions about the Ainu and Hokkaido.
2. We recommend that the Government of Japan to take a clear position on historical recognition that Hokkaido was annexed to Japan without any consent and include it in history textbooks, in accordance with article 8 of the UNDRIP.
3. Based on the above recognition, we recommend that the Government of Japan to conduct a study to implement article 28 of UNDRIP, in cooperation with the relevant UN agencies such as the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Thank you for your attention.