

124

Item 6

EH 13 Japan 150

*(Please check against delivery)*

**Statement by the Government of Japan**  
**Expert mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous People**

**Geneva**  
**July 2013**

Mr. Chair,

The Government of Japan attaches great importance to creating a society in which human rights and fundamental freedoms are adequately promoted and protected for all people in Japan, including those of indigenous people. 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 taken in 2006, around 24,000 Ainu people live in Hokkaido Prefecture. Taking this opportunity, please allow me to highlight efforts undertaken by the Government of Japan to develop comprehensive policies aiming to achieve a society in which the dignity of Ainu people is fully respected and their status is promoted.

In 2008, after the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Diet of Japan unanimously adopted resolutions calling for the recognition of the Ainu 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 who have lived around the northern part of Japan, especially in Hokkaido, with a unique language as well as religious and cultural distinctiveness.

In July 2009, the Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy, consisting of several high-level experts, including an Ainu representative, came up with a report which recommended several basic principles of the Ainu policy and specific measures in various areas, including education, revitalization of Ainu culture and the promotion of business. These recommendations were made with

reference to the UN Declaration as well as the actual circumstances of the country and the Ainu people, and provide the basis of Japan's Ainu policy.

The first pillar of Japan's current policy is promotion and awareness raising of Ainu culture. The Government is providing assistance to various projects such as teaching of the Ainu language through training of teachers and development of learning materials, as well as support to traditional ceremonies and production of craftworks.

The second pillar is improvement of living standards for the Ainu people. The prefectural government, with financial support from the national government, has implemented measures such as assistance to education, including scholarships, assistance with employment, modernization of the agriculture and fishery sectors, and business promotion for small and middle-sized companies.

Furthermore, in order to ensure that the views of the Ainu people are better reflected in the relevant policy-making process, regular consultations have taken place within "the Council for Ainu Policy Promotion", which is a high-level forum hosted by the Chief Cabinet Secretary and composed of 14 members, including several Ainu representatives, since its establishment in 2009.

Mr. Chair,

I would like to refer to two of the initiatives which are under discussion in this high-level national council to promote the human rights of individuals belonging to the Ainu people. First, it has been proposed to establish a national center dedicated to the Ainu history and culture, called the Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony. It is envisaged that this center, to be located on the shore of Lake Poroto in Hokkaido, will play a key role in the transmission of Ainu culture as well as education and training of future generations. It will also promote the understanding of Ainu culture and history to visitors from within the country and abroad through various exhibitions, programmes and cultural exchanges.

The second initiative is to examine ways and means to improve living conditions of the Ainu people outside Hokkaido. A report submitted to the Council in 2011 revealed key challenges that the Ainu people outside Hokkaido have experienced to date, such as lower incomes and lower rates of university education among the Ainu people than the national average as well as unstable

employment. The working group of the Council, responding to these realities, submitted concrete recommendations such as assistance for higher education and stable employment, as well as the creation of a place for them to gather and consult around Tokyo. The Government is now trying to formulate effective measures based on these recommendations.

Mr. Chair,

Japan will continue to work closely with the Ainu people to achieve a society in which the diversity of all people is respected. Japan is also committed to making efforts to tackle many issues faced by indigenous peoples in the world, in cooperation with the United Nations and other actors of the international community.

I thank you for your attention.