

The 6th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council's
Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
United Nations: Geneva, Switzerland
8—12 July 2013

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
The Association of the Indigenous Peoples in the Ryukyus(AIPR)
Special Consultative Status with the UN ECOSOC since 2012
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Thank you Mr. Chairperson.

We, Association of Indigenous Peoples in the Ryukyus (AIPR) as the organization of Indigenous Peoples in the Ryukyus are presenting this statement in light of the full implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIPs) and in order to highlight and share with you all present here, the issue of recognition as Indigenous Peoples, protection of our rights in full accordance with UNDRIPs, especially the right to land and the need for the elaboration and utilization of the concept of our "traditional living sphere" to effectively protect and promote this right.

The Ryukyu Islands are consisted 160 islands and is located in the south west of Japan archipelago. In a part of them, there is a group of small islands named "Yukun Kubashima" in one of the languages of the Ryukyus¹, which is called "Senkaku Islands" in Japanese, "Diaoyu Islands" in Chinese. This group of islands has been an important part of the "traditional living sphere" of the indigenous peoples in the Ryukyus, especially as fishing area and key seamark in our marine life. However, recently, this historical background is completely ignored and the territorial right to these islands has been argued by Japan, China, and Taiwan excluding the right of the indigenous peoples in the Ruykyus.

The above mentioned three parties, and also other countries other than the indigenous peoples in the Ryukyus, were regarding Yukun Kubashima just as an un-resourceful islands except for fisheries. However, in 1968, the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) indicated the possibility that in the sea area in which these islands are located there might be a rich oil resource. After the publication of this information, countries have started arguing their territorial right to the islands ignoring the fact and history that it has been a part of living sphere of the indigenous peoples in the Ryukyus and without recognizing or respecting the right of indigenous peoples in the Ryukyus.

There are many rare and endemic species in these islands. Moreover, the sea area surrounding the islands is a rich fishing ground and important place for the indigenous peoples in the Ryukyus, especially those engaging in fishing and seafaring. When the Ryukyu was an independent country for more than 400 years (1429 - 1879) till it was annexed to Japan by arm, and trading with then China, Yukun Kubashima was also used as important seamark for the seaman of the Ryukyus. It is also historically proved fact that the indigenous peoples in the Ryukyus have been using these islands much more frequently and closely than any other countries. As well, the historical fact shows that it was the indigenous peoples in the Ryukyus who served as interpreters and the navigation officers for those from China. Thus, Yukun Kubashima has

¹ There are several languages in the Ryukyus and Yukun Kubashima is also called "Igunkubashima" in some areas in the Ryukyus

been an important part of the "traditional living sphere" of the indigenous peoples in the Ryukyus from before and even after Ryukyu kingdom was annexed by arm to Japan in 1879.

However today, the fact and history that the islands have been the traditional living sphere of indigenous peoples are simply ignored by those who are arguing their territorial right to them, while the relevant State has never recognized the existence and history, much less the rights, of the indigenous peoples in the Ryukyus. In the status of complete ignorance and non-recognition, the indigenous peoples in the Ryukyus have been completely excluded from the discussion among states and currently not able to use their living sphere since the possibility of military clashes between Japan and China around the islands is so high following the recent expansion of military power of both and hostile policies to each other.

Against this backdrop, we especially and strongly condemn the government of Japan for not recognizing the indigenous peoples in the Ryukyus as indigenous and even claiming the territorial right to Yukun Kubashima. Moreover, the government of Japan is insisting on "exploration", "ownerless land," and "(rules of) preoccupation" as the principle grounds of its claim for the territorial right to the islands, while these points have been internationally regarded as "the principle of colonisation" and thus rejected as legal or even reasonable grounds. As explained above, there are indigenous peoples who have been traditionally using the area as an important part of their living sphere and therefore it is unreasonable and even outrageous when modern States are claiming their territorial rights to traditional living sphere of indigenous peoples such as Yukun Kubashima, even using the concept of "ownerless land", "(rules of) preoccupation" and "exploitation" as grounds for their claims.

As a matter of reasonable process, the government of Japan, much before claiming its right to Yukun Kubashima, has to first of all justly recognize the existence and rights of indigenous peoples in the Ryukyus, and protect and promote ^{their} ~~the~~ rights of indigenous peoples in full accordance with the UNDRIPs. Moreover ~~and in particular, based on the Articles 25 to 32 of the UNDRIPs,~~ Japan must recognize the fact and the history that Yukun Kubashima has been a part of the traditional living sphere of indigenous peoples in the Ryukyus and protect their right to the area. At the same time, we, indigenous peoples in the Ryukyus, strongly reject and oppose to any military usage of our islands and seas and any other parts of our living sphere by any country.

At last, we would like to request EMRIP to suggest to the Human Rights Council that EMRIP conducts its thematic study on the concept of "traditional living sphere" of indigenous peoples and elaborate it as a key notion to be utilized in close relation to the rights of indigenous peoples and in the framework of obligations of States under international human rights laws.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.