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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Yasuhisa Kawamura  
Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations**

**Agenda Item 9: Traditional knowledge: generation, transmission and protection**

**At the 18<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
23 April 2019**

Mr./Madam Chair,  
Representatives of the Member States and the indigenous peoples,

Indigenous traditional knowledge is contained in indigenous languages, relationships, communities and institutions and is a fundamental element of indigenous peoples' identities. The transmission of traditional knowledge is an essential process to preserving their cultures and identities.

Since the adoption of the Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People, Japan has steadily made efforts to address indigenous issues including preserving their cultures and identities.

In June 2008 the Parliament adopted resolutions to recognize the Ainu population as Indigenous Peoples of Japan, and then-Chief Cabinet Secretary Mr. Nobutaka Machimura released a statement acknowledging the Ainu people as Indigenous people of Japan and established the Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy. The Ainu have historically lived in the northern part of the Japanese Archipelago, particularly in Hokkaido, with a unique language as well as religious and cultural distinctiveness.

Thereafter the Government of Japan and representatives of the Ainu have discussed comprehensive and effective measures to address various issues, including education, the revitalization of their culture and the economic development.

One of the pillars of Japan's policies for the Ainu people is promotion and awareness-raising of Ainu culture. The Government of Japan has provided assistance to various projects such as an educational program on the Ainu language.

In addition to those policies, taking into consideration domestic and international demand to provide adequate recognition of indigenous people, the Government submitted a draft bill which aims to implement a more comprehensive package of measures to promote local Ainu communities, industries and internal and international exchanges through tourism, at the National Diet.

The bill recognizes the Ainu as an indigenous people for the first time in national legislation and states its objective as “realizing a society that will respect the pride of the Ainu as an ethnic group.”

The bill also establishes subsidiaries to promote Ainu culture and eases regulations so that the Ainu people can log in state-owned forests and catch salmon in rivers to protect and promote their traditional culture.

Furthermore, the Government is now developing the “Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony”, consisting of a national Ainu museum and park as a national center for the revitalization of the Ainu culture in Hokkaido. The Symbolic Space, called “UPOPOI” will be open in 2020 and will promote nationwide understanding of the history and culture of the Ainu people.

The bill was approved by the both Houses of the National Diet.

The Government of Japan will continue to work closely with the Ainu people in Japan to achieve a society where the diversity of all people is respected.

Mr. / Madam Chair,

Japan has also committed itself to tackle various issues that the indigenous peoples face in the world. One of the principles of the Development Cooperation Charter of Japan is promoting human security, a concept pursuing the right of individuals— especially vulnerable groups, including the indigenous people.

Based on this principle, Japan has supported projects such as preservation of traditional cultures of the indigenous people in several countries in cooperation with the United Nations and other actors of the international community.

Thank you.