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Item 7 Half-day on urban indigenous peoples and migration

Situation and issues of Ainu in Kanto region

Joint Statement Ainu Resource Centre and Simin Gaikou Centre

Thank you for giving us an opportunity to share our experience.

In my statement, I would like to explain the historical and social background and current issues of Ainu in Kanto region, which surrounds the Tokyo metropolitan area.

Many Ainu have migrated from Hokkaido, which we traditionally originated from, to urban areas, especially during the 1960s, during the period of high economic growth in Japan. A purpose of the migration has differed, but mainly because of financial reason and discrimination caused by the Japanese assimilation policy in Hokkaido.

From the 1970s, the Ainu in the Kanto area came together to voice out their demand. Along with the domestic political movements in the Ainu communities, an awareness of the Ainu issues has been increased, and Ainu organizations have slowly organized. For example, there are four active Ainu associations in Kanto at present, which are aimed at organizing mainly cultural activities. When there is a political dialogue with a regional government such as Tokyo metropolitan government and Foundation of Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture, they work collectively with the "Ainu Utari Liaison Group".

There are four requests that have been brought up by those associations to the Tokyo government since 1970s. First they requested to establish an Ainu community centre as a place to gather and transmit culture. Secondly, they have requested to receive social welfare support. Thirdly, it has been requested to place the Ainu social counselor. Lastly, a

survey on the social and economic conditions should be conducted in order to have further understanding on the social and economic situation.

A current and most important issue is that the Ainu are not recognized as indigenous peoples by the Japanese government, which is a root of many problems faced by us. In 1997, the only domestic constitution called Ainu Culture Promotion Act¹ was enacted and the Foundation of Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture established under the act operate various projects relating to Ainu culture. The foundation holds three Ainu culture classes such as a language, wood carving, and clothing in Tokyo.

However, this Act does not recognize the Ainu as indigenous peoples nor recognize the rights to self determination. Furthermore, this Act has a limitation of having our enjoyment of culture because of a lack of a full consultation and participation in a decision making process. It is because this Act does not recognize our cultural rights, which is encouraged in Article 27 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Moreover, this act has another limitation in a process of an implementation. It states in the government ordinance for the act that the Hokkaido regional government is only appointed to implement projects under this act.

Recommendation

1 To call upon the Government of Japan to establish the Ainu act which fully recognizes rights as indigenous peoples.

2 To request the Government of Japan to revise the government ordinance relating Ainu Culture Promotion Act to implement the act nationally not only Hokkaido.

3 To call up the UN agencies to continue an effort to conduct a study of the urban indigenous peoples.

Thank you, Madam Chair

¹ The Law Concerning Promotion of Ainu Culture and Dissemination and Enlightenment of Knowledge about Ainu Traditions