

ITFICS

EM15 Japan 191

*(Please check against delivery)*

**Statement by the Government of Japan**  
**Eighth session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

**Geneva**  
**20 July 2015**

Mr. Chair,

Japan joins others in expressing our appreciation to the members of the Expert Mechanism for your valuable work. The Government of Japan attaches great importance of creating a society in which human rights and fundamental freedoms are adequately promoted and protected for all people in Japan, taking into account the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

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 people as indigenous people and the establishment of comprehensive policies for them. In concert with these resolutions, the Government recognized that the Ainu people are an indigenous people who have lived in the northern regions of Japan, in particular in Hokkaido, and have a linguistic, religious, and cultural distinctiveness.

Thereafter, the Government of Japan set up a high-level Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy, with the participation of several Ainu representatives. In addition to existing efforts for the revitalization of Ainu culture, awareness-raising with regard to Ainu traditions, and lifestyle-related facilities in Hokkaido, the Advisory Council proposed the creation of a Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony, measures to improve the living standards of Ainu people residing outside of Hokkaido, and establishment of a system to better reflect the views of the Ainu people in the relevant policy-making process.

Following that, the Government of Japan established the Council for Ainu Policy Promotion, a high-level forum hosted by the Chief Cabinet Secretary and includes several Ainu representatives as its members, in 2009. We would like to share two projects being developed under the coordination of this Council.

First, the Government of Japan has been making efforts to establish a cluster of facilities dedicated to Ainu history and culture, which is to be named the Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony. It will be composed of a national museum of Ainu culture and national park of ethnic co-existence, and will play a key role in the revitalization and transmission of Ainu culture including through exhibitions of Ainu culture and history as well as providing people with space for interaction. It is our plan to open The Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony in 2020, when Japan hosts the Tokyo Olympic and

Paralympic Games. We particularly wish to emphasize the spirit of ethnic harmony at that time.

Second, the Government of Japan has been striving to improve living standards for the Ainu people, including those who live outside of Hokkaido. As research has revealed key challenges that the Ainu people outside of Hokkaido have faced, such as lower incomes and educational attainment compare to the national average as well as unstable employment situations, effective measures are being explored and carried out to support their matriculation into institutions of higher learning as well as their stable employment.

Japan recognizes that retaining honor and respect for the Ainu as an indigenous population, and passing this along to the next generation, contributes to the realization of a vibrant, cohesive society in which various values can coexist.

Thank you.