

PF13 NAOTO 144



Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations

866 United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017 Phone: (212) 223-4300 · www.un.int/japan/

(Please check against delivery)

**Statement by Mr. Naoto Hisajima
Minister, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations**

**at the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
on the agenda item 7 (a): Implementation of the UN Declaration
on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

**New York
22 May 2013**

Mr. Chairman,

According to a survey in 2006, around 24,000 Ainu people live in Hokkaido Prefecture of Japan. The Government of Japan has made efforts 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 the 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 education 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 of Ainu people. The prefectural government, with financial support by the national government, has implemented measures such as assistance to education, including scholarship, assistance to employment, modernization of agriculture and fishery sectors, and industrial promotion of small companies.

Furthermore, as the 2009 report recommended establishment of a forum to reflect the views of the Ainu people into the policy-making process, the Government established the Council for Ainu Policy Promotion in the same year. The Council is a high-level forum hosted by the Chief Cabinet Secretary and composed of 14 members, including several Ainu representatives. It has continuously held consultations since then.

I would like to refer to two projects which the Council discussed in July 2012. First, it is 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, located on the shore of Lake Poroto in Hokkaido, will contribute to the transmission of culture by Ainu people and training of next generations. It will also promote the understanding of visitors from within the country and abroad through various exhibitions, experience programmes and cultural exchanges.

The second topic is the nationwide research on the actual living conditions of Ainu people outside Hokkaido. A report submitted to the Council in 2011 revealed that the income level of the Ainu people outside Hokkaido is lower than the national average, that unstable employment is seen, and that the rate of people who went to college is lower, as is the case with Ainu people in Hokkaido. The working group of the Council, responding to this reality, submitted concrete recommendations such as assistance for higher education and stable employment, as well as creation of a place for their mingling and consulting in the urban area. The Government is now trying to formulate effective measures based on these recommendations.

Mr. Chairman,

Japan will continue to work closely with the Ainu people to achieve a society where 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.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.