

Oral statement: **Dai Kitabayashi**

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous People

Item 8: **UNDRIP including Study on Recognition, reparation and recognition**

Date: **Wednesday 17th July 15:00 – 18:00**

Tandi ga tandi.

Thank you very much Madam Chair. I am Dai Kitabayashi, a youth of Ryukyu people from Okinawa, Japan and am a current fellow of the Indigenous Fellowship Program.

Today I would like to emphasize that, WE, Ryukyu people, need to be recognized as one of the indigenous peoples in Japan.

Our island, our people, our culture is now suffering from land exploitation and landfilling as never before. With the rapidly growing overtourism, transnational companies strive to gain wealth through developing resorts and our cultural ancestral lands and ocean are deeply damaged. In addition to this, not only US military force but also Japanese self-defense forces are proceeding new installation constructions in several locations in our land. We have tried to engage in dialogue with the government in relation to these excessive constructions but the government keeps disregarding them.

The worst thing about this is that we have no mechanisms available to have our rights heard and our misfortunes continue to be added to our already difficult history. The fact that we are not recognized as one of the indigenous peoples in Japan causes loss of educational opportunity on indigenous peoples rights to maintain and strengthen our distinctive spiritual relationship with our traditionally owned lands and ocean and this kept our voice silent. There can be no doubt that the excessive developments will never support our sustainable tourism and that also causes losses in national interest.

I would like to urge the Expert Mechanism to recommend the State, through the Human Rights Council, to recognize Ryukyu peoples as its indigenous peoples. Also, Expert Mechanism country visit to Okinawa is strongly requested to evaluate the implementation of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or at least to initiate a dialogue on this.

Thank you very much and I also want to express my gratitude to OHCHR for bringing me here for the great opportunity.