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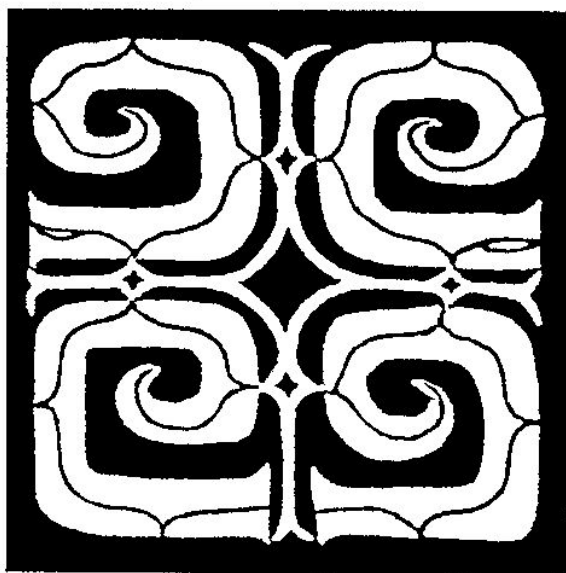
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Statement
Submitted to
The Eleventh Session The Working
Group on Indigenous Populations



Geneva, Switzerland
July, 1993

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Madam Chair and fellow indigenous peoples of the world, and all other parties concerned:

We, the Ainu people, are very happy and grateful for this opportunity to speak at the U.N. Working Group on Indigenous Populations again this year.

The wide variety of cultures, religions and social and economic conditions of indigenous peoples, along with their common plight of being the most neglected and vulnerable groups in the history of international society, is finally becoming the focus of the world's attention, with designation of 1993 as the International Year of the world's Indigenous People.

We were very happy to hear that a member of our indigenous peoples, Ms. Rigoberta Menchu from Guatemala, received the Nobel Peace Prize, almost as a prelude to the International Year of the world's Indigenous People, and has been actively working as a goodwill ambassador appointed by the UN Secretary General, for this year-1993. We expect that she will also attract the attention and promote the understanding of the world. We wish her good health and success in her future activities.

The three major characteristics concerning the Ainu people are as follows:

- (1) Ainu territory was divided as a result of historical progress and due to the cold war between east and west. Furthermore, the centuries-long forced evacuations and exploitation of labor caused Ainu society and economy to collapse. The Ainu people are indeed an indigenous people, even though the "Northern Territories" issue, which is still being disputed by Japan and Russia, is recognized by international society to be a problem.
- (2) While Japan has a population of 123 million, the minority Ainu people have an extremely low population of less than 100,000.
- (3) After Hokkaido (Ainu Moshir, a part of historical Ainu territory), which occupies 22% of Japan's total area, was included as part of the nation's territory, forcible assimilation measures were taken on the basis of the strong settlement and development policies. Furthermore, through changes in the national administrative system, the nation has made exceptionally rapid economic development and gained economic influence in the world.

After clarifying the above points, we would like to make a brief presentation and offer some suggestions regarding the current state and circumstances of the Ainu people, the indigenous people of Japan, in order to contribute to the discussion at the Working Group this year.

As we have only limited time for our presentation, objective data related to the content of the presentation will be supplied in the handout.

* Recent state of Ainu people in Japan

<As a minority>

In the Japanese government's report to the United Nations concerning Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1980, it was stated that "minorities of the kind mentioned in the Covenant do not exist in Japan." The then prime minister made a remark denying the existence of the Ainu people, saying that "Japan is a racially homogeneous country." School textbooks used by children throughout the nation in public schools also referred to Japan as a racially homogeneous country, and the existence of the Ainu people was not recognized in the education system.

The 1991 report to the United Nations concerning Article 27 of the same Covenant defined minorities in Japan and, in accordance with that definition, provided that "As for the question of the people of Ainu raised in relation to Article 27 of the Covenant, they may be called the minorities of that Article, because it is recognized that these people preserve their own religion and language and maintain their own culture."

To our regret, the Japanese government did not even have criteria to recognize the existence of the Ainu people as an ethnic minority until 1991, due to the history of forced assimilation and annexation.

The Ainu people are now recognized as an ethnic minority, and there was no allusion to a racially homogeneous country in textbooks used in the nation's elementary, junior high and high schools in 1992, probably because of the change of the view of the government.

However, there are still obvious mistakes in textbooks regarding Ainu history, culture and present conditions, and the people involved in textbook publishing lack a proper understanding of the Ainu people.

<As indigenous people>

On December 10, 1992, Giichi Nomura, Executive Director of the Ainu Association of Hokkaido, was given the honor of attending and making a speech at the opening ceremony of the International Year of the world's Indigenous People.

It was a significant event for the Ainu people of Japan, as it led to the recognition by the Japanese government and Japanese people that the Ainu people are directly involved in various activities conducted by the United Nations and other systems concerned with indigenous peoples.

However, even though the Japanese government recognizes the Ainu people as a minority, it does not recognize them as an indigenous people (see Material 1). We think this is because a request has been made by our association, the Hokkaido government and the assembly for the national government to enact a new Ainu law. This request is based on the rights of indigenous peoples (Materials 2 and 3).

The Diet record and the record of our activities for the enactment of such a new law have been attached to the handout.

Just as it took a long time for the Ainu people to be recognized as a minority, the Japanese government is also having a hard time defining indigenous peoples in the context of the Japanese legal system, considering the results of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which is being prepar-

ed by the United Nations, and coordinating the above two matters with the demands of the Ainu people.

It is an undeniable fact that the Ainu people are an indigenous people. We will not speak at length about it here, as it has been declared by the director of the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka and various groups of historians. We will only mention a particularly symbolic case. The "Collection of Data Concerning the History of Territorial Issues between Japan and Russia - Joint Compilation," which was prepared based on the mutual agreement of the two countries in 1992, was produced on the assumption that the Ainu people are an indigenous people.

* Measures taken by the Japanese government regarding an indigenous people in international society.

The Japanese government voted in favor of the International Year for the world's Indigenous Peoples at the 45th United Nations General Assembly on December 18, 1990. In 1991, the Japanese government decided to contribute \$20,000 to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations, in response to the request of our association. Furthermore, the government contributed \$50,000 for the United Nations Voluntary Fund for the International Year of the world's Indigenous People (target sum being US\$500,000) in 1993.

Regardless of the amount of money, we take a favorable view of the government's attitude and are grateful for their help.

Our association is going to request further help from the Japanese government, in the form of continued and increased contributions to the funds for indigenous peoples.

The picture book which was delivered to this conference room, "Ainu Moshir - The World of Ainu Seen through Folk Patterns," was published by the National Museum of Ethnology in response to our request.

* Measures taken in Japan for the International Year of the World's Indigenous People

It seemed difficult for the Japanese government to introduce a special budget for this purpose, as the Ainu people were not officially recognized as the indigenous people of Japan. However, we understand that the national government and local public organizations have made efforts to respond to our requests (cultural performances at the National Theater, exhibitions in national and local public museums, demonstrations of traditional Ainu dancing in various parts of the nation, etc.) by drawing from the budgets of other cultural programs.

However, as there is a tendency to emphasize the cultural aspects, we think that the legal and historical position of the Ainu people and specific measures should be promoted starting from this specially-designated year.

* Suggestions from the Ainu Association of Hokkaido

Giichi Nomura, executive director of the Ainu Association of Hokkaido, spoke at the opening ceremony at the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1992, and outlined the seven main points listed below.

We are going to read out 4, 5, 6 and 7, as we regard them as important for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and for the measures to be

taken in the future.

1. December 10 should be remembered as a red-letter day for the Ainu people, whose existence had not been recognized by the Japanese government until a few years ago, as the day when we were officially recognized by the United Nations.
2. The ethos of the indigenous Ainu people, in terms of their lifestyle, economy, society and culture, was lost through the development and assimilation measures of the Japanese government.
3. The Ainu Association of Hokkaido should not simply blame the government for the past, but should demand "a new partnership" with the government and invite the government to the discussion table.
4. The Japanese government should pay close attention to the effect of the activities of Japanese companies and foreign aid of the Japanese government on the lives of indigenous peoples, and must strive to establish new partnerships, not only with the Ainu people but also with indigenous peoples throughout the world.
5. The Ainu Association of Hokkaido should request the United Nations to establish an international standard to ensure the rights of indigenous people who are the victims of ethnocide.
6. The Ainu Association of Hokkaido should request the United Nations to establish an international organization to observe the conditions of the rights of indigenous peoples, and the member states to support it financially.
7. While the Ainu people may demand that the Japanese government grant them all the rights of indigenous peoples discussed at the United Nations, including the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination, such demands shall be ~~made~~ "a high degree of autonomy," and shall be made in consideration of such principles as "the unity of the nation" and "preservation of the nation's territorial integrity."

When we think about the future of indigenous peoples, it tends to be obscured by issues regarding the world's population, food, the environment, North-South problems, or other urgent global problems.

The aforementioned problems generally involve or are related to the issue faced by indigenous peoples, but it is not right to evade the issue of indigenous peoples or integrate it into other issues.

In order to solve the issues faced by the most neglected and vulnerable indigenous people, we sincerely hope to launch the Decade for Indigenous Peoples in 1994, as stipulated in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, June 25, 1993, after the International Year of the world's Indigenous People, 1993.

We tend to think that the continued attendance, since 1987, of the Ainu people at this Working Group has served as a means to monitor indirectly international society and has also promoted the understanding of the people of the world and the Japanese government.

With your support, we will continue our efforts to raise the awareness of human rights in the world and to establish the rights of indigenous peoples in the future. Thank you.

Minutes of the 125th Lower House Committee on Foreign Affairs

(Igarashi, member of the House of Representatives)

December 4, 1992

Kozo Igarashi

Let me ask another question. The International Year for the World's Indigenous People, which was so designated by the UN, will start on the 10th of this month. Various events are to be held for this International Year for the World's Indigenous People. In December 1990, the 45th United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution which designated 1993 the International Year for the World's Indigenous People. In December, the 46th United Nations General Assembly adopted the Action Program for the specially-designated year.

The Action Program includes a clause outlining the Plans for the International Year for the World's Indigenous People. In order to make the year a success, each country "shall designate a person of an appropriate division of a ministry or department to be in charge of the year and establish a national committee, which consists of representatives from government, indigenous people and NGO (nongovernmental organizations), to prepare national action programs." I understand that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs knows the fact that the Action Program includes such a clause.

In accordance with the clause, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs placed the Human Rights and Refugee Division in charge of the year after conferring with other ministries and agencies. I have heard that the ministries and agencies concerned met three times. However, I understand that a national committee, consisting of representatives of the government, the indigenous people and nongovernmental organizations, has not yet been established. Why hasn't the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a national committee?

Spokesman (Kawai)

I'll try to answer your question. As you pointed out, we consider the International Year for the World's Indigenous People very significant in terms of promoting international cooperation to solve various problems in such fields as human rights, environment, education and the health of indigenous people.

For the first time this year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs investigated the plans of other countries for the International Year for the World's Indigenous People. As you pointed out, the ministry met three times with the ministries and agencies concerned, based on the investigation. At the meetings, we explained to them the meaning of the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, the plans of other countries for the specially-designated year, and the requests from the Hokkaido government and other institutions concerned. We also requested that the ministries and agencies make plans for the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, and we have been making arrangements with those ministries and agencies. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would like to continue to take a positive approach to this matter.

Therefore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is now discussing plans for public relations regarding the meaning of the year.

Kozo Igarashi

That does not answer my question. However, that does not bother me, because

it's a fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not established a Japanese national committee as stipulated in the UN resolution, which I mentioned earlier. I have serious doubt about the intentions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The UN resolution and the contents of the work plans are as follows: "(Each country) shall promote the initiative of indigenous people in such fields as model projects regarding radio, TV, education, health, employment, housing and the environment." "(Each country) shall provide information prepared jointly by the country and its indigenous people regarding general domestic conditions of (the indigenous people) and activities during the year." "(Each country) shall encourage its indigenous people to participate in the preparation and execution of all activities in relation to the year." "(Each country) shall encourage the organizations and communities of its indigenous people to prepare their own plans and activities."

In short, the UN emphasizes the participation of the indigenous peoples to promote their initiative for the International Year for the World's Indigenous People. However, a national committee has not even been established yet. What are we to make of this fact? For example, did the Ministry of Foreign Affairs talk with or confer with the Ainu people about this matter?

Spokesman (Kawai)

We received several petitions from Hokkaido's preparatory body. We have taken those opportunities to explain our plans and other related matters, which we are now discussing, and to exchange opinions.

Kozo Igarashi

As it is, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has only received their petitions and has not ever heard their opinions, isn't that right? I cannot help doubting whether you actually have a sense of human rights. I assume from your attitude that you do not have any plans for next year. There are only a few days to be left this year. Moreover, the UN will open the International Year for the World's Indigenous People at the General Assembly on December 10. On the other hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not made domestic work plans for the International Year for the World's Indigenous People. Is that right?

I heard that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received from the Hokkaido government petitions and requests for three works. I understand that you are discussing work plans based on the requests from the Hokkaido government, but your attitude toward the year is not right. At any rate, you must make specific plans as soon as possible. You must surely listen to the opinions of the Ainu people as you prepare such plans. I am sure that such a process is in line with the UN resolution.

I think the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must at least make specific work plans to prepare for the year as soon as possible, preferably within this year. I would like the Parliamentary Vice Minister to answer my question.

Government committee member (Kakizawa)

I think that, as you pointed out, Japan has come to a point where it should deal with its indigenous people, minorities and other problems from an international perspective.

I've heard that 13 ministries and agencies are involved in this matter. I hope Japan will decide what to do as soon as possible, through close communication among the ministries and agencies and by listening to the opinions of the parties concerned and other related people. I would also like to encourage the ministries and agencies concerned and authorities in charge to deal with this matter in such a way.

Kozo Igarashi

It seems that you do not understand this matter very well. The fact is that the work plans are being narrowed down to certain ones. The plans include two of three major requests from the Hokkaido government: 1) performances of traditional Ainu dances and other programs at the National Theater of Japan and in major cities throughout Japan; and 2) A special exhibition of Ainu culture at the National Museum.

These requests involve the Agency for Cultural Affairs, which I suppose has also received these requests. As a spokesman of the agency is attending this session, I would like the spokesman to explain what plans are being made in the Agency for Cultural Affairs.

Spokesman (Yoshizawa)

The entire government, not only the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is in charge of the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, is now discussing what it should do for the year. We think it is important to preserve, hand down, and exhibit the traditional dances of the Ainu and cultural assets such as Yukara so that people may understand the culture of the Ainu people. We are now endeavoring to make plans for next year as soon as possible by taking into consideration various circumstances, such as the requests from the Hokkaido government and the Ainu Association of Hokkaido and the discussions by the entire government for the International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples, and by conferring and arranging with institutions concerned.

Kozo Igarashi

I think the Agency for Cultural Affairs will have particular difficulty arranging the schedule of performances at theaters, even with cooperation of local citizens and institutions. Therefore, proper plans cannot be made without rapid preparation. For that reason, I would like you to make specific plans within this year. Can you respond my request?

Spokesman (Yoshizawa)

Based on the meaning of the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, requests from the Hokkaido government and the Ainu Association of Hokkaido, and other factors, we are now discussing this matter. At this stage, we hope to make plans within this year.

Kozo Igarashi

I would be very pleased if you could do so.

I would also like to say that I have several questions for the Councilors' Office on Internal Affairs, the most important body dealing with Ainu issues, but that I cannot ask them due to time limitations. I would like to ask them next time, if possible.

In short, the government cannot confirm whether or not the Ainu people are an indigenous people, even though it has held about three meetings a month for the past three years. I am not satisfied with your assertion. It is a poor response to the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, which is to start soon. I take this opportunity to demand firmly that the government establish a policy regarding the enactment of the New Ainu Law as soon as possible.