

**Examination of the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Combined Periodic  
Report by the Government of Japan under Article 9 of the  
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial  
Discrimination  
Opening Statement**

20 August 2014

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to extend opening remarks on behalf of the Japanese delegation at the beginning of the examination by the Committee on the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Combined Periodic Report by the Government of Japan under Article 9 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

As we participate in today's examination by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Combined Periodic Report by the Government of Japan under Article 9 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, I would like to express my respect for the unstinting daily efforts of this Committee. It is a great honor to have the opportunity to engage in a constructive dialogue with this esteemed Committee.

The Government of Japan believes that all human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal values and legitimate concerns of the international community. It is with this belief that the Government of Japan is actively engaged in efforts to protect and promote human rights in the spirit of "dialogue" and "cooperation." As part of such efforts, in January 2013, the Government of Japan compiled and submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination its Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Combined Periodic Report concerning Japan's efforts for the domestic implementation of rights guaranteed by the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. A number of Ministries and Agencies engaged in the process of preparing the report. Moreover, the government sought opinions from civil society at large through the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and conducted dialogues with civil society, including NGOs in particular. In addition, the Government of Japan

took as much time as possible to hear the opinions of those who wished to express them even after the submission of this Report. The Government of Japan recognizes the importance of private-sector activities aimed at promoting respect for human rights, and will continue to pay attention to dialogues with members of civil society in the future.

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination is the main mechanism for efforts to deal with racism, etc. Universal implementation of the Convention around the world is important for creating a society without racial discrimination. Not only ratification of international conventions, but also the extent to which the rights stipulated in them are protected and promoted by each State Party is, needless to say, important. In this respect, at this examination, we are looking forward to listening to various opinions that will be useful in further improving the human rights situation in Japan.

Distinguished Members of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,

I would like to take this opportunity to explain some of the major steps the Government of Japan has recently taken.

First, Japan is actively working on measures to establish a comprehensive policy to ensure the respect of the human rights of the Ainu people.

Among them is the Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony, on which the Government of Japan is now focusing its efforts. This was recommended as a policy serving as the pivot for future Ainu policy in the Report of the Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy, which was submitted in July 2009. In June 2014, the basic policy for its development and management was approved by the Cabinet. The Government of Japan will develop the Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony, with a view to timing its opening to coincide with the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.

This space will become a symbol in the future of Japan's formation of a society that respects harmony with diverse and rich cultures and different ethnic groups, while respecting the dignity of the Ainu people, who are indigenous to Japan, and dealing with the problems facing Ainu culture.

Secondly, Japan's refugee recognition system took effect in January 1982. The Government of Japan has been appropriately carrying out refugee recognition procedures in accordance with this system. In addition, I would like to emphasize that,

with a view to enhancing the neutrality and fairness of refugee recognition procedures, the Government of Japan has established the refugee examination counselor system, which is a highly independent system for examining objections; that a person who has an objection to a decision to deny refugee status may file an action; and that the Government of Japan strictly practices the principle of non-refoulement. In addition, the Government of Japan has set the standard processing period at six months and is processing applications in order to stabilize the legal status of refugee recognition applicants as soon as possible. Moreover, the Government of Japan has been promoting efforts to expedite procedures by substantially increasing the number of refugee examination counselors from 19 at the time when the system was inaugurated to 80. The Government of Japan has prepared pamphlets in 14 languages offering guidance concerning refugee recognition application procedures and makes them available at regional immigration bureaus nationwide and on the Internet. In addition, the Government of Japan is endeavoring to ensure user-friendly procedures for applicants, including making it a general rule to conduct interviews concerning applications for refugee recognition via an interpreter, in the language that the applicant wishes to use.

Furthermore, under its framework for resettlement of refugees, the Government of Japan has accepted 63 Myanmarese refugees who had been sheltered at a refugee camp in Thailand, with the aim of making an international contribution and providing humanitarian assistance.

The Government of Japan has also decided to make Myanmarese refugees temporarily staying in Malaysia eligible for acceptance and to accept from Thailand the family members of refugees whom Japan has accepted in the past under the framework. These moves have been highly appreciated by the international community. The Government of Japan will continue to strive to support the steady acceptance and local integration of resettled refugees, through such measures as guidance concerning daily life, Japanese language training, and employment placement.

Finally, the Government of Japan emphasizes human rights education and awareness-raising based on the concept of mutual respect for human rights with a correct understanding not only of one's own human rights but also of the human rights of others, as well as an awareness of the responsibilities that accompany the exercise of rights; in other words, the concept of the harmony of human rights. The Government of Japan enacted the Act for Promotion of Human Rights Education and Encouragement in December 2000, and formulated the Basic Plan for Promotion of Human Rights Education and Encouragement based on said Act in March 2002. Under the Basic Plan,

the Human Rights Organs of the Ministry of Justice actively promote measures to expand and strengthen awareness-raising activities to disseminate and enhance the philosophy of respect for human rights. The aim of this is to foster human rights awareness as appropriate in the age of globalization, specifically, by eliminating prejudice and discriminatory attitudes against foreign nationals, and promoting tolerance and respect for diverse cultures, religions, lifestyles and customs of foreign nationals. As part of such measures, the Organs carry out awareness-raising activities nationwide throughout the year, including holding lectures and distributing awareness-raising brochures, under the slogan of "Respect the Rights of Foreign nationals", as one of the annual priority matters of promotion activities, with the aim of eliminating prejudice and discrimination against foreign nationals.

Moreover, the Human Rights Organs of the Ministry of Justice have established Human Rights Counseling Offices for Foreign Nationals, which offer human rights counseling services for foreign nationals, with interpreting available in English, Chinese, and other languages. If the Organs acknowledge human rights infringements, the Organs promptly investigate and take appropriate measures depending on the cases.

Distinguished Members of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,

As you know, Japan will host the the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo.

This will be a festive occasion not only for Tokyo, but also for the whole of Japan, from Hokkaido, where the Ainu people live, all the way to Okinawa.

The Olympic Charter's Fundamental Principles of Olympism stipulate that "any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement."

In compliance with this Olympic Charter, and in light of the spirit of the Constitution of Japan and the Preamble of this Convention, Japan will continue to work tirelessly to improve its human rights situation, not permitting any form of discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity.

The Japanese delegation is also ready to provide answers with the utmost sincerity on any matters of concern you may have during this important examination concerning the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. It is my hope that we will have fruitful discussions.

Thank you very much for your attention.