

Third UPR Review of Japan
Closing Remarks by Government Representative Okamura
(November 14 in Geneva)

- The Government of Japan recognizes that the comfort women issue is one that severely injured the honor and dignity of many women. With such understanding the government has extended its heartfelt apologies and remorse to the former comfort women, through the Statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary and the letters issued by successive Prime Ministers.

- The issues of reparations, properties and claims arising from the war, including the issue of comfort women, have been settled through treaties, agreements and instruments between Japan and countries concerned, and Japan has been faithfully implementing its legal obligations. In addition, since 1995, the Government of Japan has extended maximum cooperation to the Asian Women's Fund, which implemented “medical and welfare support projects” and provided “atonement money,” to offer realistic relief to aged comfort women. And recently, as I stated at the beginning, in accordance with the Japan-Republic of Korea Agreement regarding the comfort women issue of December 2015, the Government of the Republic of Korea established a foundation for the purpose of providing support for the former comfort women, and the Government of Japan contributed one billion yen to the foundation. Currently, projects providing medical care and welfare support are being carried out by the foundation.

- The Government of Japan will continue its efforts to gain a better understanding of the sincere feelings of the people and the Government of Japan regarding this issue. While we will resolutely adhere to this position, we will continue to seek accurate understanding of the issue of comfort women in the international community.

- As explained by the representative of the Government of Japan at the time of the Review of Japan by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in February last year, the Government of Japan conducted a full-scale fact-finding study on the issue of comfort women in the early 1990s. However, “forceful taking away” of comfort women by the military and government authorities and the figure “200,000 persons” as the total number of comfort women could not be confirmed in any of the documents that the Government of Japan delved into in this study. Furthermore, referring to comfort women as “sex slaves” is inappropriate, as it contradicts the facts. Let me also add the term “sex slaves” does not appear in the Japan-Republic of Korea Agreement of December 2015 either.

- Japan will continue its efforts to ensure that Japan's views and efforts on the comfort women issue are properly recognized by the international community based on an objective understanding of relevant facts.

[In addition to the above, invoke the following as the closing statement]

Mr. President,

Distinguished representatives of the member states,

- let me make a few closing remarks.
- I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all member states for having participated and provided constructive and valuable assessments, questions and comments. We also appreciate the contributions of the Troika – Belgium, Qatar and Togo.
- Improvement of the human rights situation cannot be realized overnight; it is a process that requires unceasing efforts and perseverance by all countries. In that context I believe that the UPR is a valuable opportunity to review our own human rights situation and measures for its improvement. Japan has done its best to faithfully respond to the views from other countries within the allotted time.
- To conclude, I reiterate Japan's continued commitment to cooperate constructively with the UPR mechanism and make further efforts for the protection and promotion of human rights in Japan and the international community.

(End)