

**MISSION PERMANENTE DU JAPON**  
AUPRÈS DES ORGANISATIONS INTERNATIONALES  
GENÈVE-SUISSE

TM/OHCHR/82

The Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and has the honour to attach herewith the response of the Government of Japan to the Joint Communication Ref. : AL JPN 6/2021 from Special Procedures by the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

The Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 1 March 2022



Enclosure mentioned.

**Response of the Government of Japan to Joint Communication from Special  
Procedures**

by

**the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights,  
the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples,  
the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief,  
the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and  
guarantees of non-recurrence**

- 1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.**

With regard to the remains of the Ainu people, the Government of Japan has been taking initiatives toward their return, as described in 3 below.

The Government does not recognize the people of Okinawa as indigenous people, and there is no widely shared recognition either in Okinawa or Japan as a whole that the Okinawan people are indigenous people.

In fact, several local councils composed of representatives of the people of Okinawa in Okinawa Prefecture have adopted resolutions that reject references to them as indigenous people.

A Japanese citizen in or from Okinawa is guaranteed full and equal rights as a Japanese citizen. The Government has clearly explained this on the occasion of Consideration of Japan's Periodic Report at the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

- 2. Please provide details on the legal provisions considered in the requests of the Ryukyuan descendant organization about the repatriation of the human remains from Kyoto University, and their compatibility with the human rights standards and obligations mentioned therein.**

The Government of Japan does not recognize any requests by the organization mentioned in the Joint Communication.

- 3. Please provide information about the measures that the Government has taken, or is considering to take, to ensure the effective implementation of the court decisions in the cases requesting the return of the human remains of the Ainu indigenous peoples to their descendants. Please include information about any measure taken to redress the robberies of these graves.**

The Government of Japan has given due consideration to the circumstances that the remains and accompanying burial accessories of the Ainu people, which had been excavated and collected in the past, were stored at universities across Japan. Taking this situation into account, in order for the Ainu people to be able to realize their memorial services with dignity, the Government, with the understanding and cooperation of relevant stakeholders, has been promoting the return of the remains to the Ainu people. In this connection, the Government has been temporarily bringing together those remains that cannot be returned immediately in the Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony (UPOPOY), until appropriate persons or regions to which to return the remains can be confirmed. The Government has been making these efforts regardless of the results of lawsuits between the plaintiff and the universities concerned.

The Government's surveys indicated that approximately 1,900 boxes of remains are stored at different universities in Japan. Through the above efforts, some of the remains have already been returned from the universities to the regions they were taken from, and at present, approximately 1,600 boxes of remains have been stored in "UPOPOY".

The Government has made such information on these efforts publicly available.

- 4. Please provide information on any policy the Government has enforced to support the full exercise of the rights of Ryukyuan and Ainu descendants to access and enjoy heritage and to take part in decisions that concern their heritage, including any actions to support and promote the creation of their own museums and historical narratives, as well as measures to ensure that they fully enjoy their right to worship and practice their indigenous faiths, beliefs and customs.**
  
- 5. Please explain any measure taken by the Government to promote tolerance and understanding for cultural diversity and engage in critical thinking about the past.**

#### **In response to matters 4 and 5**

The Government of Japan has made continuous efforts to promote indigenous people's cultures and identities.

In 2008, our National Diet adopted resolutions to recognize the Ainu population as an indigenous people of Japan, and the then-Chief Cabinet Secretary released a statement acknowledging the Ainu people as an indigenous people of Japan.

The Government has conducted discussions and consultations with relevant stakeholders, in particular with the Ainu people, on comprehensive and effective measures, including for the education, cultural revitalization, and economic development of the Ainu people, and has reflected their opinions in its policy on the Ainu people.

In 2019, the Government enacted legislation on comprehensive promotion of local Ainu communities, industries, and cultural exchanges through tourism. The act legally recognizes the Ainu people as an indigenous people and states its objective as “realizing a society that will respect the pride of the Ainu.” The act also established subsidies to promote Ainu culture and stipulated special provisions so that the Ainu people can log in state-owned forests and catch salmon in rivers for the purpose of protecting and promoting their traditional culture.

Furthermore, in July 2020, the Government opened the “Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony,” as a national center for the revitalization of the Ainu culture. The Symbolic Space is called “UPOPOY,” which means “singing together in a large group” in the Ainu language.

The Ainu culture places great emphasis on respect for all living creatures. The Government is determined to continue to work closely with the Ainu people to achieve a society where the diversity and dignity of all individuals are respected.