MISSION PERMANENTE DU JAPON
AUPRÈS DES ORGANISATIONS INTERNATIONALES
GENÈVE-SUISSE

TS/UN/322

The Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva and, with reference to the latter's Note Verbale AL JPN 4/2025, dated 17 July 2025, has the honour to transmit herewith the response of the Government of Japan to the Joint Communication from Special Procedures.

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 in Geneva the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 12 September 2025

Enclosure mentioned

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

1. The Government of Japan has sincerely dealt with issues of reparations, property, and claims pertaining to the Second World War under the San Francisco Peace Treaty, which the Government of Japan concluded with 45 countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, and through other bilateral treaties, agreements, and instruments. These issues, including those of claims of individuals, have already been legally settled with the parties to these treaties, agreements, and instruments. Regarding the recommendations of international human rights mechanisms, it is not appropriate to raise the comfort women issue in reports on the implementation of the relevant conventions as they do not apply retroactively to any issues that occurred prior to Japan's conclusion thereof.

2. Moreover, the Government of Japan has actively taken additional measures to restore the honor of former comfort women and to provide remedies for them. In 1995, the "Asian Women's Fund" (hereinafter "AWF") was established with the cooperation of the people of Japan and the Government of Japan for the purpose of carrying out atonement and remedy projects for former comfort women. The Government of Japan provided approximately 4.8 billion yen to the AWF and the people of Japan donated approximately 600 million yen. The Government of Japan extended maximum cooperation to the AWF, which implemented medical and welfare support projects and provided atonement money to offer realistic relief to former comfort women. As part of the AWF's projects, atonement money (2 million yen per person), which was funded by donations from the Japanese people, was provided to 285 former comfort women (211 in the Philippines, 61 in the Republic of Korea [hereinafter "the ROK"], and 13 in Taiwan). Moreover, the AWF implemented medical and welfare support projects funded with contributions by the Government of Japan in those countries (3 million yen per person in the ROK and Taiwan, and 1.2 million yen per person in the Philippines). This amounted to a total of 5 million yen per person in the ROK and Taiwan, and 3.2 million yen per person in the Philippines. Furthermore, using funds contributed by the Government of Japan, the AWF extended its support for projects to promote social welfare services for older persons in Indonesia as well as projects to help improve the living conditions of former comfort women in the Netherlands.

3. When the atonement money as well as the medical and welfare support were provided to individual former comfort women, former Prime Ministers (namely, PM HASHIMOTO Ryutaro, PM OBUCHI Keizo, PM MORI Yoshiro, and PM KOIZUMI Junichiro) sent signed letters expressing apologies and remorse directly to each former comfort woman.

4. In particular, in terms of Japan-ROK relations, the issue concerning property and claims between Japan and the ROK was "settled completely and finally" in 1965 through the Agreement on the Settlement of Problems Concerning Property and Claims and on the Economic Cooperation between Japan and the Republic of Korea. Furthermore, as a result of great diplomatic efforts, the Government of Japan and the Government of the ROK confirmed that the comfort women issue was "resolved finally and irreversibly" with the agreement reached at the Japan-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting in December 2015. The Japanese and ROK leaders also confirmed that they would take responsibility as leaders to implement this agreement, and that they would deal with various issues based on the spirit of this agreement. This agreement was welcomed by the international community, including then Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon and the United States Government. In accordance with this agreement, in August 2016, the Government of Japan contributed 1 billion yen to the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation (hereinafter "the Foundation") established by the Government of the ROK. The Foundation provided financial support to 35 out of the 47 former comfort women who were alive at the time of the agreement, and to the bereaved families of 65 out of the 199 former comfort women who were deceased at the time. The agreement has been received positively by many former comfort women. In this way, the Government of Japan has implemented all measures it committed to under the agreement. The Government of the ROK itself also acknowledges that this agreement is an official agreement between the two governments and the international community is closely following the ROK's implementation of the agreement.

5. As stated in the Statement by Prime Minister ABE Shinzo issued in 2015, Japan will lead the world in making the 21st century an era in which women's human rights are not infringed upon. Japan contributes to and supports various projects

of UN organizations such as UN Women, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the Global Fund for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. Japan is also engaged in combating sexual violence in conflict through means such as proactively providing relief to survivors of sexual violence in conflict who are currently suffering and raising awareness for the prevention of such violence.

6. Regarding the memorialization process, in general terms, it is important that it is implemented based on facts and in a way that will not escalate confrontation among concerned parties. The historical documents regarding the comfort women issue that have been researched, collected, and sorted by the Government of Japan, the efforts by the Fund mentioned above, the testimonies of the victims and messages from Japanese people (contributors to the Fund), and other related materials are made public in the "Digital Museum – The Comfort Women Issue and the Asian Women's Fund" (website: http://www.awf.or.jp/) in Japanese, English, and Korean.

7. The movement to install statues of or monuments to comfort women in other countries is inconsistent with the positions and sincere efforts of the Government of Japan as stated above, and we therefore consider such actions to be extremely regrettable. The Government of Japan hopes that people of various origins live in peace and harmony. The Government of Japan will continue its effort to ensure that Japan's views and sincere efforts on the comfort women issue are properly recognized by the international community based on an objective understanding of relevant facts.

8. Regarding the statue of the comfort women in Seoul in particular, ROK Foreign Minister Yun stated at the Joint Press Occasion for the Japan-ROK agreement of 2015: "the Government of the ROK acknowledges the fact that the Government of Japan is concerned about the statue built in front of the Embassy of Japan in Seoul from the viewpoint of preventing any disturbance of the peace of the mission or impairment of its dignity, and will strive to solve this issue in an appropriate manner through taking measures such as consulting with related organizations about possible ways of addressing this issue."

9. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the issue concerning property and claims

between Japan and the ROK, including the comfort women issue, were “settled completely and finally” with the Agreement on the Settlement of Problem Concerning Property and Claims and on the Economic Cooperation between Japan and the Republic of Korea in 1965. Furthermore, it was confirmed that the comfort women issue was “resolved finally and irreversibly” with the agreement reached at the Japan-ROK Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in 2015. Nevertheless, the April 2025 judgment of the Cheongju District Court of the ROK and other judgments were subsequently rendered. These judgments denied the application of the principle of State immunity under international law in lawsuits filed by former comfort women and others against the Government of Japan and ordered the Government of Japan to pay compensation to the plaintiffs. They are in clear violation of international law and the agreements between Japan and Korea. This is extremely regrettable and absolutely unacceptable. We strongly urge the ROK to take appropriate measures to remedy its breaches of international law as a country.

10. With regards to education, the National Curriculum Standard, which provides, under the law, the standards for the design of the school curriculum, stipulates that students should be taught to understand that the Second World War caused tremendous suffering to humanity at large. What is to be described in textbooks based on the National Curriculum Standard is left to the discretion of each textbook publisher, and some textbooks do mention comfort women.