

**Appeal to the Minister for Foreign Affairs regarding recommendation from UN
Committee on the Rights of the Child relating to Japanese textbooks: Eliminate
interference in Japanese domestic affairs**

Among the recommendations issued by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child on June 16, 2010 was one relating to Japanese textbooks. Since that recommendation is extremely unreasonable, the Society for History Textbook Reform has submitted an appeal to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Our appeal was delivered to the Minister for Foreign Affairs via the Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs Division of the Ministry's Foreign Policy Bureau on July 22 by three Society officers: Messrs. Sugihara Seishiro and Fukuchi Atsushi (vice chairmen), and Suzuki Naoyuki (secretary general). The text of the appeal, in its entirety, follows.

July 22, 2010

TO: His Excellency Okada Katsuya
Minister for Foreign Affairs

FROM: JAPANESE SOCIETY FOR TEXTBOOK REFORM
Fujioka Nobukatsu, Chairman

SUBJECT: Appeal for the elimination of attempts to interfere in Japanese domestic affairs
(the content of Japanese textbooks) by manipulating the UN Committee on the
Rights of the Child

1. Between May 25 and June 11 of this year, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child deliberated on the extent of Japan's implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Committee issued a report stating the results of those deliberations on June 15. In the report are references to Japan's textbooks, a topic that is of paramount interest to the Society for History Textbook Reform. Accordingly, we hereby request that Your Excellency take appropriate action to preserve Japan's sovereignty.

The relevant portions of the report are as follows:

74. The Committee is concerned at information that Japanese history textbooks do not enhance the mutual understanding of children from different countries in the region as they represent a Japanese interpretation of historical events only.

75. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that officially reviewed textbooks present a balanced view of historical events in the Asia-Pacific region.

2. This recommendation is exceedingly unreasonable in terms of principle, content and procedure.

First, the matter of principle: decisions regarding a nation's textbooks and their content are

inexorably linked to the foundation of that nation's educational system; they cannot be consigned to any other entity. We cannot and must not brook interference in Japanese domestic affairs (in this case, our textbooks) by any organization, regardless of its nature.

Second, the matter of content: even a cursory glance at the recommendation lays bare its spuriousness. For instance, it contains the following language: "Japanese history textbooks do not enhance the mutual understanding of children from different countries in the region as they represent a Japanese interpretation of historical events only." As a matter of fact, the real problem plaguing Japanese history textbooks is their failure to capture the Japanese interpretation of past events because of hypersensitivity to other nations. Whatever the case, it is perfectly reasonable for history textbooks to reflect the interpretation of the nation that issues them; it is also a universal phenomenon.

Third, the matter of procedure: we would very much like to know how the "information" about which the Committee is "concerned" was brought to its attention. We find it difficult to believe that the Committee went to the trouble to prepare and carefully examine translations of Japan's history textbooks — a monumental task — prior to arriving at a judgment of those textbooks. That is why, we assume, that the language it employs ("information") is so vague. Prior to deciding on its recommendations, the Committee on the Rights of the Child held a reception with an NGO that, as the name implies, does not officially represent the Japanese government. It is possible that this reception was the venue for the communication of inaccurate information to the Committee. We recall that, in the past, the Commission on Human Rights was used by some Japanese activists to publicize the comfort-woman problem. The unfortunate outcome was that the grossly inaccurate term "sex slave" was disseminated throughout the world. Similarly, the recent recommendation is procedurally unjust and opaque.

3. In postwar Japan, the notion that international organizations and the international community are neutral, fair and noble entities has attained dominance in the sovereign nation that is Japan, primarily through the medium of civics education. Consequently, the Japanese tend to believe that the United Nations and other international organizations are unconditionally neutral and fair. The reality is that, as anyone familiar with the organization is aware, the UN is often the scene of struggles between nations with divergent interests; individual member states attempt to manipulate its organizations to further their interests.

In light of the above, we ask the Minister for Foreign Affairs to respond to the recommendation regarding textbooks made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which clearly constitutes unreasonable interference in Japanese domestic affairs, not in a defensive manner, but by taking a firm stand, as befits a sovereign state, and resolutely repudiating that recommendation. Additionally, we ask the Japanese government to make a concerted effort toward radical improvements that deter activists from running rampant on UN committees.