

Chapter 4: Breakthrough at the UN Second Mission (July 2015)



Our second investigative delegation to the UN in Geneva (July 2015)

A. Japanese rally begins at the UN

By Fujiki Shunichi

The pre-session and the main session

Twenty people participated in the second mission from the Alliance for Truth about the Comfort Women. This time, the purpose was to attend the pre-session for the 63rd session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Allow me to briefly explain how the UN Committees work. Last year we attended the main session of the United Nations Human Rights Committee. And this year we went to the pre-session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. These two are different committees.

Every Committee has a pre-session and a main session. At a pre-session or a preliminary meeting, NGOs (non-governmental organizations) which have registered as such with the UN beforehand submit requests, questions and complaints regarding the government of the country which is to be investigated at the Committee's session. Up

until last year, a pre-session was in fact an arena where anti-Japanese left-wing activists, led by the NGO of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations, demonstrated their claims.

The UN Committees allow only those NGOs which have officially registered with the UN to send preliminary papers and to speak in the pre-session of the Committee. What is discussed here is then sent to the Japanese Government as the “List of Issues”. Last year, we only attended the main session, not the pre-session, and missed the chance to have our voices heard at the pre-session. So, this year we attended the pre-session so that our view might be reflected in the discussion at the main session, in one way or another.

The pre-session was attended by five Japanese NGOs: three anti-Japanese ones and two from our side. The names of the organizations were:

Left-wing NGOs: the Japan Federation of Bar Associations NGO, Japan’s Treaty on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women NGO Network and Space Allies

Conservative NGOs: International Career Support Association and Japanese Women for Justice and Peace

We attended the pre-session as members of the International Career Support Association. However, since only one NGO was given very little time to speak, we entered with another NGO, with the Japanese Women for Justice and Peace.

Two women requested the List of Issues to the Japanese Government be rewritten

It is much more agreeable and effective for women than men to speak about the comfort women issue. So, two women spoke for us, namely, Sugita Mio (former Diet representative from *Jisedai no To* or “The Next-Generation Party”) and Yamamoto Yumiko (President of Japanese Women for Justice and Peace). As always, NGOs made up of anti-Japanese left-wing activists repeated their accusations against the Japanese Government, concealing historical facts and using “evidence” taken out of context at will. Our speakers forcibly argued that terms such as “forced abduction” and “sex slaves,” which were often thrown about in the UN, are simply wrong, that such terms have no basis in fact at all, that they are used as anti-Japanese propaganda tools and that, in Japan, it is widely known that the comfort women were not forced into servitude, as the *Asahi Shimbun*, a major Japanese newspaper, recently confessed to its previous false reporting on this issue. We further requested that the Committee make a thorough investigation into the comfort women issue. (Ms. Sugita will report the speeches in full

in the next section of this chapter.)



Ms. Sugita Mio, former Diet representative (center) and Ms. Yamamoto Yumiko, President of Japanese Women for Justice and Peace (right) speak in the UN session.

In response to Ms. Sugita's account, the Committee chairman stated that he learned for the first time that the comfort woman issue has another perspective and that the matter shall be further investigated.

Tony Marano mentioned: "A 'Report Number 49' was filed in 1944 by the United States Army after they interrogated Korean comfort women and the report noted that "the women were 'well paid' prostitutes" and that "they went to the movies with soldiers, freely went shopping and enjoyed concerts as well." They were treated quite favorably, far from being miserable sex slaves."

A left-wing NGO told the Committee that "Ainu" people in Hokkaido, the northernmost part of Japan, people from historically segregated villages, South and North Koreans and female Okinawans still suffer from discrimination and were targets of "hate speech". Mr. Marano immediately rebuffed such talk. Mr. Marano stated that it was not just South and North Koreans who were targets of hate speech. Taking up the cause of Koreans alone as victims of hate speech will not end the suffering of other people who

are victims of harsh hate speech.

Traditionally, the UN Committee swallowed all that anti-Japanese left-wing activists asserted without evidencing a bit of doubt. This time, however, statements made by our conservative NGOs successfully changed two parts of the “List of Issues” that was to be presented to the Japanese Government. At the very least, we managed to escape a trial in absentia.

Specifically, the parts rewritten were, firstly, “The Committee was recently informed of the following fact through an official NGO statement [referring to the report we submitted] that there was no evidence to prove that comfort women were forcibly abducted. Please explain the Japanese Government’s view regarding this point.” And secondly, the “‘Ainu’ people in Hokkaido, historically segregated village people, South and North Koreans and female Okinawans” as tirelessly mentioned by anti-Japanese left-wing activists, was condensed to “minority”.

It is most noteworthy that these two points were added or changed. It is remarkable because 1) our view regarding the comfort women issue is officially taken up as agenda and 2) although mere mention of “South Korea” unfailingly caused, so far, the South Korean Government, Korean civil groups and Japanese left-wing papers to use it against Japan, arguing “the UN says this-and-that,” now, they can no longer use this phrasing, because the statement only refers to a “minority”.

The “List of Issues” made in the pre-session is to be sent to the Japanese Government by the UN, and in response, the Japanese Government would prepare a statement and objections to the “List of Issues”. Then the Japanese Government would send its “governmental delegation” to the main session to be held in February, in the following year, and elaborate their point of view. Further discussion follows and after completion of due process, the Committee will issue a request or recommendation of improvement to the Japanese Government.

Our purpose of going to the UN this time was to start toppling the widely held misperception held as true in the international community that the comfort women were “sex slaves forcibly abducted by the Japanese military.”

In this sense, it is a great achievement that we successfully had them change parts of the

“List of Issues” so that the Japanese Government will be asked to make a comment about “forced abductions.” Finally, a Japanese rally began at the UN.

However, it is too early to rejoice. Depending on how the Japanese Government responds, efforts may possibly be reduced to nothing. So, we will closely inform those in the Japanese Government, including the Foreign Ministry, of what is going on and work on them, so that the Japanese Government will clearly state that there is no evidence to prove that comfort women were forcibly abducted by the military or government officials, in the main session to be held in February 2017.

“Japanology” event worked

Last year, lacking experience and sufficient information, we did nothing effective in the end as an NGO at the UN. So, this year, we planned and held a PR event called “Japanology,” hosted by the International Career Support Association, using a room we rented inside the European headquarters of the UN. Our main purpose was to discuss issues among members of NGOs. Here, a panel exhibit was organized by the Alliance for Truth about the Comfort Women, showing evidence that “comfort women were well paid prostitutes.” We introduced traditional Japanese culture and held panel discussions featuring a variety of topics such as gaps between Japan and other countries. At the entrance to the room, we distributed material and English-language publications regarding the comfort women.

During a panel discussion, I mentioned differences in common sense between that of Japan and that of foreign countries, urging how important it is for us to deal with the international community and make the world hear our points.

Other interesting features included: Ms. Nunoura Mayo’s lecture entitled *Ancient Japanese Women’s Social Participation and Their Intellectual Assets*, featuring *Manyoshu (Collection of the Ten Thousand Leaves)*, an unparalleled collection of ancient Japanese poems and the introduction of “*Yamato Gokoro*” (“traditional Japanese spirit”) by volunteers. We all did our best to let the world know what Japan is really like.

An Armenian doctor also gave an interesting lecture: when Armenians fell victim to the Osman Turks’ genocide, Japan sent Armenia a large amount of aid. However, this fact is not shown at the Genocide Museum. So they are working now in the museum on an

exhibit showing the good will extended by Japan at a time of tragedy.



Attendants of NGO event *Japanology* held at UN facility. Mr. Okano Toshiaki, leader of the delegation is at the center of the front line.

Incidentally, Armenians account for nearly 25% of the population of Glendale City, California, where the controversial comfort woman statue sits in a public park. In fact, South Koreans in Glendale attempted to link the Armenian genocide and the comfort women together, which eventually led to the installment of the comfort woman statue. Learning this fact, we spoke with the Armenian doctor on how to deal with the statue.

The doctor also told us that it was a good idea to distribute the paper he wrote about the subject to the Armenian community in Glendale. Now, we are working to obtain the doctor's work.

During the pre-session, I had a chance to speak with one of the Japanese UN officials for several hours. He said, "The misperception about the comfort women which is now popular worldwide is due to propaganda campaign after campaign conducted by anti-Japanese left-wing activists. I would like to thank all of you for coming to the UN and endeavoring to have your voices heard against prevailing misperceptions. I have been hurt by what has been happening here." He added, "Although your step may be

small, what you have done will surely work as a great check against anti-Japanese left-wing activists.”

In addition to these encouraging words, we obtained all kinds of useful information, which will help to make our future activities easier and more fruitful. Our UN mission this time taught us a valuable lesson—it is important to act.

Action against Memory of the World “Nanking” at UNESCO headquarters (July 30)

After we completed our UN-related business on July 29, we left our hotel in Geneva at two in the morning on July 30 and headed for UNESCO headquarters in Paris, using a rented car. There were seven of us on the journey.

Our purpose of visiting UNESCO was to prevent China from registering material related to the “military comfort women” and the “Nanking Massacre” as Memory of the World. To this end, we went to UNESCO, carrying loads of papers and a petition with signatures.

Should China’s attempt turn out to be successful, the entire world would be led to believe those lies and Japan would forever be accused of malicious falsehoods. It is quite likely that textbooks and other publications around the world would carry entirely false depictions of Japan.

At UNESCO headquarters, we handed to a secretariat staff in charge of the Memory of the World Program what we had brought from Japan: a statement prepared by Fujiwara Nobukatsu, visiting professor, Takushoku University and Takahashi Shiro, Meisei University professor; related material and publications in English and nearly 8,000 signatures against China’s register. We confirmed that all of these would surely reach the chairman of the selection committee of the Memory of the World Register.

The secretariat staff in charge of Memory of the World Register told us that since there is usually no objection raised against a register, ours was the first case in which they accepted an objection. Although there was no precedent, they accepted our objection and said that they would give it to the chairman of the selection committee for the sake of fairness. We urged him to give our material not only to the chairman, but also to all of the committee members. His answer was: “That is up to the chairman to decide.”

At the same time, I added the following as a personal point: “From the time of the Korean War to 1995, UN troops (namely, American troops), which were sent to Korea by the UN, forced poorly paid South Korean comfort women to work under dismal conditions. If what the Japanese military allegedly committed against comfort women will be registered as a Memory of the World, then, the fate of the comfort women who worked for UN troops should also, of course, be registered, to be fair. Furthermore, many more comfort women who were used in other wars should be registered as well and in that case, the effect of such memory will surely boomerang back to the UN.” I asked him to convey my message to the chairman and he said that he would.

Unfortunately, in the consultative meeting on the Memory of the World Register which was held later in October, “Nanking” submitted by China was registered as a Memory of the World.

Make request at Japanese Representative Office of UNESCO (July 31)

On the next day, we visited the office of the Japanese Representative for UNESCO, about two blocks from UNESCO headquarters. There, we met Minister Nara and a clerk and told them about our visit to UNESCO headquarters. We asked them to follow up on our action.

As we had explained at UNESCO headquarters, we emphasized that once China’s register was granted, Japan would be damaged beyond recovery within the international community and we requested that they stop China from registering, by any and all means. The register would become crucial not only to Japan but also to the UN.

Being governmental officials, they seemed to be far less enthusiastic than we were. Anyway, after all our explanation and request, they said that they would take proper care of the matter.

To our great regret, however, we came to realize that, in fact, the enemies of Japan are indifferent and apathetic Japanese people themselves. In spite of the fact that our precious tax money is spent on maintaining a UNESCO Japanese representative office in Paris, people working there are not so enthusiastic or active as one would expect. We felt a strong urge to set the matter straight with the help of statesmen.



The front of the UN European headquarters in Geneva.

Through my experience at the UN and UNESCO, I realized that things have become almost beyond redemption, owing to negligence over many, many years on the part of the Japanese government and to the unchecked, traitorous Japan-bashing on the part of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations and anti-Japanese left-wing activists in the UN arena, which tried to get a decision made by UN organs supersede a judgment made by Japan's Supreme Court. Although it is clear that this disastrous situation will not be improved any time soon, I believe, at least, that our actions will make it very difficult for anti-Japanese left-wing activists to spread lies and fabrications at will as before.

Need to improve the status of our NGOs at the UN

From our experience, we have concluded that it is vital for us to strenuously continue visiting the UN, just as anti-Japanese leftist activists have done so far and to prevent them from spreading their lies and fabrications worldwide. As far as human rights issues are concerned, the UN acts exclusively based on reports submitted by NGOs. Consequently, in the future, we need to work through NGOs with highly recognized status.

There are three levels of status that are registered with the UN: General Consultative Status, Special Consultative Status and Roster Consultative Status.

Special Consultative Status enables NGOs with this status to hold various PR events using rented rooms inside the UN headquarters and to speak at the Human Rights Council and elsewhere.

NGO Japanese Women for Justice and Peace is registered as Roster Status, which means that the NGO can speak at committees. While the NGO belonging to Japan Federation of Bar Associations and anti-Japanese leftist NGOs were allowed to speak for five minutes per one organization, our NGOs were allowed only two minutes each. That is why Ms. Yamamoto and Ms. Sugita each had only two minutes to speak at the session.

As our future task, the “Alliance for Truth about the Comfort Women” should definitely obtain “Special Consultative Status” with the UN. With this higher status, multiple NGOs can participate in various UN activities with the same cause. Then, we will be able to turn what is going on inside the UN back to normal, using the same method skillfully employed by anti-Japanese leftists.

A conference on Comfort Women for the general public (July 31)

We held a conference entitled *Comfort Women Were Not Sex Slaves but Prostitutes* for the general public in a rented room at the Hotel Bristol in Geneva.

Six of us, namely, Mr. Okano Toshiaki, chief secretary of the Alliance for Truth about the Comfort Women, who led our UN mission this time; Mr. Tony Marano, who joined us from the United States; Ms. Yamamoto Yumiko, President of Japanese Women for Justice and Peace; Ms. Sugita Mio, former Diet representative; Ms. Arimoto Sakura, a resident of Geneva and I, spoke in relay and answered questions raised by the audience.

Prior to the conference, the Alliance for Truth about the Comfort Women asked Ms. Arimoto Sakura, who lives in Geneva, to put a notice of the conference in local newspapers on several occasions.

There were only ten or so citizens who actually came to attend our conference. However, among the audience was a former UN worker. The conference proved to be a very good

opportunity. Useful information and advice were also provided to us as to how to attract a larger audience. We also learned that there are organizations such as the Japan Society and Cultural Society and through working with them, we could invite more Japanese residents in the city to our event. We will certainly try this approach next time.

