

Aug 23, 2017

United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization  
7, place de Fontenoy  
75352 Paris 07 SP  
FRANCE

Mr. Boyan Radoykov  
Chief of Section  
Universal Access and Preservation

#### OPEN LETTER

Re: Request for mediation with the Proposer of “The Voices of Comfort Women”

Dear Mr. Radoykov,

We, the four organizations represented by the four signatories below, made a proposal (No.2016-76) to the Memory of World Register, organized by UNESCO, and are aware that there are the two proposals on the “Comfort Women” currently being reviewed by UNESCO.

We understand that, according to information from concerned organizations or individuals, there is a possibility that some of our nominated documents overlap with documents included by another proposal, “the Voices of Comfort Women.” Should this be the case, our findings and those of the “the Voices of Comfort Women” appear to be contradictory with each other, even though the two proposals at least they are based on the shared documents.

In many occasions, UNESCO has asserted that it does not make historical judgments or interpretations of history. However, provided the same documents are nominated for the two proposals having contrary findings, UNESCO’s decision on either proposal for inclusion on the Memory of World register would have significant implications on historical judgments or its interpretations on a specific historical event, especially in the case that the one is registered to the Memory of World register while the other is rejected.

We do not wish at all that our proposal would generate negative impressions to the world on the Memory of the World Programme. Therefore, we would like to respectfully request UNESCO to mediate about the differences between the two proposers to clarify the categorization and interpretation of the documents overlapping, which we consider indispensable. The following possibilities should be carefully considered upon the mediation.

We would like to add that aforementioned request for meditation is completely in accordance with the views presented in the progress report of the IAC Chair concerning the review of the Memory of the World Programme, which was made available on the website of UNESCO.

## Scenario 1

### **A possibility that documents irrelevant or inconsistent with the principal findings of the proposals are included**

We completely understand that UNESCO has no intention to make historical judgments or its interpretations. On the other hand, UNESCO must carefully examine whether the Summary at the section 1 in the nomination form explain and describe the contents of nominated documents correctly and objectively, since the main objective of the nomination should be written in the Summary. Furthermore, UNESCO must strictly examine whether any documents which are irrelevant or inconsistent with their arguments are mixed in the documents nominated. If a decision is made to inscribe such documents, such decision can be regarded as a distortion or destruction of the value of precious primary source.

## Scenario 2

### **A possibility that two or more proposers nominate same documents under incompatible categories**

Provided that the same documents are nominated by two proposers for incompatible findings, UNESCO is required to handle the examination of such nomination proposals with utmost care and impartiality as well as rational, logical and transparent manners. However, this must not be easy at all. Besides, any decision can be regarded as an official judgment of the UN system upon a certain historical event. Especially in the case that one proposal is registered and another is rejected, UNESCO's decision would lead to confusions and contestations among concerned member states and their people. Such outcome should be avoided by all means.

We request UNESCO to pay utmost attention in examining these two proposals in the above-mentioned two scenarios. It is necessary for UNESCO to clarify the intentions or reasons of the each proposer why the particular documents are selected especially those of the documents overlapping for the both proposals

We propose dialogues with the proposer of “the Voices of Comfort Women”, with a sincere hope that such dialogues would contribute to the examination being undertaken by UNESCO.

The dialogues are the most important tool in accordance with the spirits of UNESCO, and we consider that engaging in such sincere dialogues with the proposer of “the Voices of Comfort Women” is indispensable for fostering mutual understanding. This is to say that to make a decision of inscription or non-inscription on the register in absence of the dialogues that we are proposing in this letter goes against the spirits of UNESCO and would be inadmissible.

At the end of this letter, we would like to appeal again the goal of the Memory of the World Programme is neither to distort nor to destruct the precious primary sources but to safeguard and provide access to documentary heritage.

Respectfully Submitted,

## References :

Extracts of the resolution adopted by the 201<sup>st</sup> Session of Executive Board, May 2017;

3. Welcomes the progress achieved by IAC on the MoW review
5. Welcomes the IAC Chairs progress report contained in the Annex (201 EX/5 Part I (H)) and encourages the IAC to continue working on the statutes and guidelines along the lines of this report and its recommendations.
6. Request the Director General to present the final report on the MoW review by the IAC to the Executive Board at its 202nd session.  
\* 201 EX/5 Part I (H)
- (7) Questioned nominators will be given more time for dialogue to the concerned parties even before submission to the RSC. Dialogue may be mediated.  
(c) If no agreement has been reached, continued dialogue among the concerned parties may be encouraged for one more cycle (i.e. maximum of four years).

Signature

Kase Hideaki  
Chairman, the Alliance for Truth about Comfort Women

Signature

Koichi Mera,  
Representative, the Study Group for Japan's Rebirth

Signature

Kazunobu Oyama  
Chief Director, the Institute of Research of Policy of Media and Broadcasting

Signature

Yumiko Yamamoto  
President, Japanese Women for Justice and Peace

Appendix: List of the documents possibly nominated by the aforementioned two proposers