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**Request to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to
terminate the issue of comfort women**

This statement is intended to request that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) solve the comfort women issue.

First, we discuss the efforts of the Japanese Government to restore the honor of the former comfort women and the measures it has taken to rescue them. Next, we discuss the illegality for the United Nations and CEDAW to address the comfort women issue. Further, we mention

that various recommendations made by CEDAW violate freedom of education, speech and learning. Also, we refer to the Korean “comfort women business” that hinders the solution of the comfort women issue. Lastly, we state our requests to CEDAW.

1. The Japanese Government has actively taken various measures to restore the honor of the former comfort women and save them

(1) “Asian Peace and Friendship Fund for Women”

In 1995, to carry out compensation and relief works for former comfort women, an incorporated foundation, “Asian Peace and Friendship Fund for Women” (Asian Women’s Fund, for short), was established for the payment of atonement money to former comfort women and medical/welfare support works. The Japanese Government contributed 4.8 billion yen to the Fund and fully cooperated with it. In addition, ordinary Japanese citizens donated about 600 million yen. Through the efforts of the Asian Women’s Fund, “atonement money” (2 million yen per person) was paid to 285 former comfort women (211 Filipinos, 61 Koreans and 13 Taiwanese) out of the people’s donations. The Asian Women’s Fund also paid 3 million yen (in Korea and Taiwan) and 1.2 million yen (in the Philippines) per person as funds for medical/welfare support work out of the money the Japanese Government contributed, the total sum being 5 million yen per person in Korea and Taiwan and 3.2 million yen per person in the Philippines. In addition, the Asian Women’s Fund supported the work of building welfare facilities for the aged in Indonesia and the work to support the improvement of the living conditions for former comfort women in the Netherlands, using the money contributed by the Japanese Government.

The Japanese Government did not attempt to evade responsibility by allowing a huge sum of money to be collected from ordinary people. The truth was the opposite. It was that the Japanese Government did not intend to finish the support work for the former comfort women solely in terms of money, but it tried to have each of the Japanese people further understand the comfort women issue, which eventually came to fruition. To blame the Japanese Government for the evasion of its responsibility is completely beside the mark.

(2) Direct apologies from consecutive Japanese Prime Ministers

When the atonement money and medical/welfare support were given to individual comfort women, the then Japanese Prime Ministers (Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro, Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo, Prime Minister Mori Yoshiro and Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro) directly sent a signed letter of apology and remorse to respective former comfort women.

- (3) “Finally, and irreversibly resolved” –the 1965 Agreement on the Settlement of Problems Concerning Property and Claims and the 2015 Japan-Korea Comfort Women Agreement Regarding the Japan-Korea relationship, including the comfort women issue, the problem of property and claims between the two countries was finally and completely settled by the Agreement on the Settlement of Problems Concerning Property and Claims and in Economic Cooperation between Japan and Korea in 1965 and after the tremendous diplomatic efforts the Governments of Japan and the Republic of Korea agreed to the “final and irreversible resolution of the comfort women issue” during the Japan-Korea Foreign Ministers’ meeting held in December 2015. Also, between the two heads of State, it was confirmed that the two leaders would implement the agreement with full responsibility and cope with various issues, following the spirit of the Agreement. This agreement was welcomed by the then United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, the United States and the rest of the international community. Based on this agreement, in August 2016, the Japanese Government contributed one billion yen to the “Conciliation and Healing Foundation” established by the Korean Government. The Foundation paid money to 35 women out of the 47 survivors at the time of the Agreement and to 64 members of the bereaved families out of the 199 deceased comfort women, which was greatly appreciated by many former comfort women.

As mentioned this far, Japan has completely implemented the measures promised under the Japan-Korea Agreement. The Korean Government recognized the fact that this was an official agreement between the two Governments. However, Korea ignored this Agreement and would not fulfill it. The international community keeps an eye on Korea for its fulfillment.

- (4) Leadership in solving the women’s human rights issues

As the Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo stated in 2015, it is an urgent task to make the 21st century the century of perfect protection of women’s human rights. To lead such determined efforts, Japan will contribute to and support various works conducted by the United Nations women’s organizations, the UN Secretary General’s special representative office, global funds for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and actively relieve victims of sexual abuse under regional conflicts and engage in educational programs to prevent such violence.

2. It is illegal for the United Nations to address the comfort women issue

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women does not apply to issues that took place before Japan signed the Convention in 1985. Therefore, it is not appropriate to address the comfort women issue in the context of the situation report of this Convention.

In addition, regarding the issues of compensation, property and claims, they have been legally settled, after the Japanese Government has faithfully fulfilled the requirements stipulated in the San Francisco Peace Treaty signed with 45 countries, such as the United States, Great Britain, and France, and in other bilateral treaties with the concerned countries, including the issue of individual claims.

3. Infringement on freedom of education

In February 2016, CEDAW recommended that the Japanese Government “adequately integrate the issue of ‘comfort women’ in textbooks and ensure that historical facts are objectively presented to students and the general public.” However, such a recommendation violates freedom of education of a State and cannot be overlooked.

In the first place, Japan is the only country that presents “comfort women” in textbooks. It is a common global practice that military sets up comfort stations in wartime and there is no need to mention such countries here. Korea ran comfort stations for the United States military maintained by the Korean Government from 1951 to 1996 and Korean soldiers also used the comfort stations. The Korean Government made tremendous profits from comfort stations and praised comfort women as “dollar-earning fairies,” “true patriots” and “civilian diplomats,” encouraging prostitution as business. However, Korea or any other country would not teach their children the existence of comfort stations/whorehouses and the state involvement in the business through textbooks. (In many Korean textbooks, there are descriptions of Japanese military comfort women but none of Korean military comfort women.)

If CEDAW intends to totally abolish sexual abuse against women and investigate cases of sexual abuse in the past, it is hardly impartial unless the Japanese victims of sexual abuse are equally dealt with. After the war, such facts like Japanese refugees from Manchuria falling prey to rape and plunder committed by Russian soldiers, or the GHQ asking the Japanese Government to set up comfort stations are just the tip of an iceberg.

In addition, while Korea makes loud accusations regarding the comfort women, the issue of Lai Dai Han related to the Korean soldiers in Vietnam is a grave sexual crime that should not be overlooked. Many women were raped and killed on the spot. CEDAW has left this grave

issue unattended to this day, The Committee seemingly pretends not to notice the issue, since there is no movement raising the issue or the voice of protest is too feeble to be heard.

4. The recommendation violating the freedom of speech and learning

In 2016, CEDAW pointed out to the Japanese Government that “there has been an increase in the number of statements from public officials and leaders regarding the State party’s responsibility for violations committed against ‘comfort women’” and requested to “ensure that its leaders and public officials desist from making disparaging statements regarding responsibility, which have the effect of retraumatizing victims” and asked the Japanese Government to “indicate the measures taken to ensure that leaders and public officials desist from making disparaging statements that have the effect of retraumatizing victims.”

First, we would like to ask the Committee to concretely and precisely indicate what “statements from public officials and leaders regarding ‘comfort women’ refer to in the above recommendation and request.

The Japanese Government’s official view decided during a cabinet meeting in 2007 was that “Forceful taking away of comfort women by the Japanese military and government authorities could not be confirmed in any of the documents that the Government of Japan was able to identify,” and in 2016, the then Prime Minister Abe Shinzo clearly stated that the Japanese Government maintains the same official view.

Even so, if there is a statement insistently claiming that “comfort women were “forcefully taken away” and treated like “sexual slaves,” such statement should be criticized and asked to be withdrawn. If such a duly criticism and request should be included in the Recommendation among “disparaging statements that have the effect of retraumatizing victims and public officials and leaders should desist from making”, it is totally beside the mark and infringes on freedom of speech.

In addition, in 2022, Professor J. Mark Ramseyer of Harvard, John M. Olin Center for Law, Economics and Business publicized a paper revealing that “comfort women” were contractual employees for providing sexual service. Indignant at his paper, those researchers and scholars insisting that “comfort women were forcibly abducted victims” dared to launch a petition for the dismissal of Professor Ramseyer, instead of academically refuting Professor Ramseyer. Should CEDAW recommend that such study and statement made by Professor Ramseyer be included among “disparaging statements for public officials and leaders to desist from making,

which have the effect of retraumatizing victims,” such recommendation clearly violates freedom of study and oppresses truth-searching study and research.

5. The truth about the Korean comfort women business

In the background of the never-ending comfort women issue lies the “comfort women business,” which uses comfort women solely for money. The typical case is the “comfort woman statues.” In addition, support organizations for former comfort women, such as the Korean Council for Justice and House of Sharing, are also making a lot of money out of the enormous subsidies and donations.

Recently, however, one after another, cases of wrongdoing have been revealed, related to the relief measures for comfort women, as cited below.

(1) Comfort woman statues

In December 2011, in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, the first comfort woman statue was established. It was made by a Korean couple of sculptors. As of March 2022, the number of comfort woman statues in Korea increased from 20 before the Japan-Korea Agreement to 144. Overseas installations also increased from 9 sites before the Agreement to 20 sites. The sculptor couple makes 30,000 dollars (3.4 million yen) for production of one statue. The gross revenue the couple received from making comfort woman statues amounts to about 300 million yen and an estimated 100 million yen of it is profit, after deducting various costs.

(2) The Korean Council for Justice

The Korean Council for Justice received the total of about 312 million yen in the form of official subsidies and public donations for three years from 2017 to 2019.

(3) House of Sharing

House of Sharing is run by a religious body, the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, and serves as facilities for former comfort women to live together. It has been estimated that they collected approximately 850 million yen as sponsorship money and donations from 2015 to 2019.

(4) Exposed wrongdoings committed by former comfort women support organizations

In May 2020, a former comfort woman said, “The Korean Council (the former Korean Council for the Women Drafted for the Military Sexual Slavery by Japan) earned enormous sum of money in the form of subsidies and donations using comfort women, but they have not used

the money for former comfort women.”

- 1) The Korean Council for Justice used less than 3% of 312 million yen of subsidies and donations for former comfort women. Later, the former head of the Korean Council for Justice and a member of the National Assembly, Ms. Yoon Mee-hyang was indicted on charges of embezzlement and fraud for having privately misused fund. In June 2020, the facility director of the Korean Council for Justice was subjected to house search and committed suicide.
- 2) It has been reported that House of Sharing spent about 20 million yen, mere 2.3% of the total of 850 million yen of donations and other income, for comfort women. In January 2023, the defendant An Sin-gwon, former director of House of Sharing, was sentenced to two and a half years imprisonment. The former secretary general and another staff member were also convicted and sentenced to probation. In addition, Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism House of Sharing, a social welfare corporation that runs the facility, was ordered to pay a 1.03 million yen fine.

6. Our request to CEDAW

We make the following requests to CEDAW.

- (1) To indicate the goal and target level

The recommendations and requests made by CEDAW only state that the measures and actions taken by Japan were “not sufficient” or “not faithful.” However, as mentioned in the re-cited report of the Japanese Government of 2021: 1. The Japanese Government has actively taken various measures to restore the honor of the former comfort women and save them,” the Japanese Government’s measures and responses were “sufficient” in terms of money, and consecutive Prime Ministers’ respective responses in the form of apology to each of the comfort women were faithful. If CEDAW considers it as “insufficient,” please show us the grounds for the judgment. In addition, please show us the concrete goal of “sufficient measures.” If not, this issue will be almost eternally postponed, never to be settled.

- (2) To appropriately evaluate measures and responses taken by Japan so far

How does CEDAW evaluate the above mentioned “1. The Japanese Government has actively taken various measures to restore the honor of the former comfort women and save them”?

We would like to ask the Committee to indicate the evaluation and the ground for it. We

request that the Committee make the evaluation after fully considering the situations in other countries. Namely, in terms of historical consequences, regarding sexual crimes repeatedly committed in the battlegrounds throughout the world, we would like to know what relief measures the perpetrator countries took toward the victims of sexual abuse. Based on the actual examples, we request that the Committee evaluate the measures taken by Japan.

(3) To withdraw the recommendation that infringes on freedom of education

We request the Committee's recommendation to the Japanese Government stating "to adequately integrate the issue of 'comfort women' in textbooks" to be withdrawn. If the Committee should make such a recommendation, we think it proper that the Committee should ask the Governments of other countries concerned to present the respective "comfort women" in their own textbooks as historical fact. The Committee should equally recommend to the Korean Government to present in Korean textbooks such facts as the comfort stations for the United States military established by the Korean Government, which made such tremendous amounts of money from 1951 to 1996 that comfort women were praised as "dollar-earning fairies," "true patriots," and "civilian diplomats," promoting prostitution as profitable business.

In addition, students should be informed of the reasons why comfort women were needed as well as of the sexual crimes in the battlegrounds. For example, incidents such as the rape and plunder of Japanese refugees from Manchuria committed by Russian soldiers, the GHQ's request that the Japanese Government set up comfort stations, and the tragedy of Lai Dai Han caused by the Korean soldiers in Vietnam should be presented in textbooks in the countries concerned (both the victims and perpetrators) to prevent sexual crimes in the future.

4) To withdraw Recommendation violating freedom of study

History study seems to reveal the truth almost every moment through discoveries of new historical sources. Related to the comfort women issue, in 2022, Professor Ramseyer of Harvard University announced in an essay that "comfort women" were employed under contract to provide sexual services. Should CEDAW regard Professor Ramseyer's study and statement as "disparaging statements which have the effect of retraumatizing victims" that the Committee recommends "leaders and public officials to desist from making," we request such a recommendation to be immediately withdrawn.

5) To withdraw the recommendation that infringes on freedom of speech

The fact that "comfort women" were employed by contract for providing sexual service cannot

be changed, however inconvenient it may seem to “comfort women” themselves. Pretending to be blind to the truth and obstinately alleging that “comfort women were forcibly abducted and treated like sexual slaves” should be criticized and withdrawn. Should such due criticism and request be interpreted as disparaging statements made by leaders and public officials that may retraumatize victims, it is nothing short of infringement on freedom of speech. We request CEDAW to immediately withdraw any recommendation that violates freedom of speech.

6) Recommendation regarding Korean “comfort women business”

As mentioned in 5 “The truth about Korean comfort women business,” “comfort women” have now become a business and related individuals and support organizations are making a lot of money out of it. As long as such “comfort women business” prospers, the comfort women issue will never be done with. Therefore, we request CEDAW to conduct a survey to find out about the business, endeavor to unravel the issue and make an appropriate recommendation.

7) To totally condemn sexual violence in countries other than Japan

Sexual crimes in wartime, namely, raping of women, is being committed even today in Ukraine and elsewhere. We request CEDAW to clarify the true situation of raping and recommend strict measures against it.

Regarding Korea, which is still very intent on making accusations about the “comfort women,” we would like the Committee to thoroughly investigate and condemn the treatment of Lai Dai Han, which was a result of the grave sexual crimes committed by Korean soldiers in Vietnam. Countless women were raped and killed on the spot, but the truth about the issue is still unknown to this day. The Korean Government refuses to investigate the truth about the matter. We wonder why CEDAW will not pursue this issue. Even if the voices of victims are feeble, the protection of women’s human rights being the Committee’s responsibility, we strongly request that the Committee vigorously tackle the Lai Dai Han issue.

END