

PRESS RELEASE

25 FEBRUARY 1994

1. Japan failed, for the first time at the UN human rights meetings, to reply against the statements made by the five NGOs and two governments, in which de facto IMPUNITY was condemned as regards crimes against the "comfort women", the euphemism of the sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Forces and Government during and before World War II.

Japan has been openly and repeatedly criticized since February 1992 by the NGOs and governments at the UN Commission and the Sub-Commission on Human Rights, but the Japanese Government always replied and defended themselves, maintaining the legal position that the issue as regards the "comfort women" was resolved by the multilateral and bilateral treaties concluded after World War II. Considering these past practices of Japan, the Japan's failure to respond to the condemnations is regarded by the NGOs that Japan could not maintain the legal position mentioned above and that it was impossible for them to submit any good defense against the issue of impunity, namely the demands for the punishment of perpetrators of the crimes under international law, such as crimes against humanity and the legal points raised as regards the breach of international obligations under the 1930 Forced Labour Convention and the 1910 Convention on Suppression of Trafficking in White Slaves.

2. The NGOs which spoke at the current 50th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights were as follows.

International Association of Democratic Lawyers (represented by Mr Ju, Hyong-Sun, Committee of Measures for Compensation to "Comfort Women" for the Japanese Army and Pacific War Victims, the DPRK) in the afternoon of 15 February under item 17;

Third World Movement against Exploitation of Women (represented by Ms Indai Lourdes Sajor, Task force for the Filipino Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, the Philippines) in the morning of 16 February under item 17;

Commission of the Churches on International Affairs - World Council of Churches (represented by Ms Heisoo Shin, Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan, the ROK) in the morning of 16 February under item 17;

International Fellowship of Reconciliation (represented by Mr Etsuro Totsuka attorney at law [Japan] and Mr Won-Woong Kim, Democratic Party in the ROK, Assembly Members' Group on the "Comfort Women" Issue) in the afternoon of 17 February under item 10; and

Liberation (represented by Mr Hong, Sang-Jin and Ms Lee, Sung Wha, Fact-finding Team for the Truth about Forced Korean Labourers, Japan) in the of February under item 11.

The governments which spoke were the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The statements read by the representatives are attached.

3. The major demands by these NGOs include the fact-finding, the punishment of the responsible persons and the direct compensation/reparations to the victims in accordance with the obligations under international law.