

RECENT POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN
ON THE ISSUE KNOWN AS "WARTIME COMFORT WOMEN"

July, 2000

The Government of Japan has been conducting a thorough fact-finding study on the issue known as "wartime comfort women" since December 1991 and announced its results in July 1992 and in August 1993. Public documents found as a result of such study are now open to the public. When the result of the study was announced in 1993, then Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono released a statement and expressed in it sincere apologies and remorse, recognizing this issue was, with the involvement of the military authorities of the day, a grave affront to the honor and dignity of large number of women. The Government of Japan, afterwards, expresses its sincere apologies and remorse to the former "wartime comfort women" on many occasions.

Recognizing that the issue known as "wartime comfort women" was a grave affront to the honor and dignity of a large number of women, the Government of Japan, together with the people of Japan, seriously discussed what could be done for expressing our sincere apologies and remorse to the former "wartime comfort women." As a result, the Asian Women's Fund (AWF) was established on July 19, 1995 in order to offer atonement from Japanese people to the former "wartime comfort women." Having decided to provide necessary assistance for the AWF by a Cabinet decision in August 1995, the Government of Japan, with a view to fulfilling its moral responsibility, has been providing all possible assistance for the AWF including bearing the whole operational costs of the AWF, assisting its fund-raising and providing the funds necessary to implement its activities, in order for the AWF to attain its goals.

1. Cooperation for the Asian Women's Fund

The Government of Japan has been cooperating with the AWF in

implementing the activities outlined below. The activities of the AWF show steady progress as a whole. As of now, in the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan, more than 160 received the atonement money from the AWF, and some of them who received atonement money expressed their gratitude in various ways. In addition, the AWF implemented its activities in Indonesia and the Netherlands as well. The Government of Japan will continue its effort to seek the understanding from the Governments and authorities and other parties of the countries and regions concerned with regard to the activities of the AWF.

(1) The Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan

The AWF makes it its principle to respect the intention of each of the aged former "wartime comfort women" in the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan where the identification processes of "wartime comfort women" have been implemented by their Governments or organization. Based upon such principle, the AWF, making use of the money donated by the Japanese people as its resource, provides the former "wartime comfort women" with atonement money which expresses the feeling of atonement by the Japanese people and, making use of the fund disbursed by the Government of Japan, implements medical and welfare support projects aimed at improving their medical and welfare condition. When the atonement money is provided, the Prime Minister, on behalf of the Government, sends a letter expressing apologies and remorse directly to each former "wartime comfort woman." The details are as follows;

(a) Letter from the Prime Minister of Japan

The Government of Japan has expressed its sincere apologies and remorse regarding the issue known as "wartime comfort women" on various occasions.

When the atonement money and medical and welfare support project are provided, the Prime Minister, on behalf of the Government, sends a letter expressing apologies and remorse directly to each former "wartime comfort woman." (The translation of the letter is

attached.)

(b) Atonement from the Japanese People

The Government of Japan has been making great efforts to raise public awareness and gain a better understanding on the issue known as "wartime comfort women." The Government has provided all possible assistance to the AWF for its fund-raising from the public to express atonement to the former "wartime comfort women."

As a result, a wide range of people including individuals, enterprises, labor unions, political parties, Diet members and Cabinet Ministers have shown their support for the aims of the AWF. As of Now, in total, more than 486 million yen including contributions to its basic assets has been donated to the AWF.

In July 1996, the AWF decided that the Fund would provide 2 million yen (the atonement money) to each former "wartime comfort women" in the Republic of Korea, the Philippines and Taiwan from these contributions.

Together with the atonement money and the letter from the Prime Minister of Japan, a letter from the President of the AWF, explaining the purpose and expected result of the AWF activities, and messages from the contributors are also conveyed to each victim.

(c) Medical and Welfare Support Projects funded by Governmental Resources

In order to fulfill its moral responsibility, the Government of Japan has decided to disburse about 700 million yen from the national budget for the medical and welfare projects of the AWF to assist the former "wartime comfort women" in the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan over a 5-year period.

Such plans as (i) improvement of housing, (ii) nursing services, and (iii) assistance in provision of medical service and medicines, are some examples of these projects. They are being carried out with the cooperation of the respective governments and authorities, and other relevant organizations, taking fully into account the actual circumstances of each of the former "wartime comfort women."

(2) Indonesia

The Government of Japan and the AWF had explored the most appropriate project to be implemented in Indonesia in order to express atonement from the Japanese people. As a result, the AWF has decided to support a project proposed by the Government of Indonesia called the "Promotion of Social Welfare Services for elderly People in Indonesia." through a fund disbursed by the Government of Japan.

(This decision was made partly because the Government of Indonesia found it difficult to identify the former "wartime comfort women."

In March 1997, the AWF concluded the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Government of Indonesia to provide financial support (380million yen over 10 years) to the project.

In this project, new facilities will be built for the elderly who have no family or relatives to look after them and are unable to work due to illness or physical handicaps. These facilities will be annexed to the public homes for elderly run by the Department of Social Affairs.

The priority will be given to those who proclaim themselves as former "wartime comfort women" for entrance into these facilities. The facilities will be established mainly in the regions where former "wartime comfort women" are thought to live. 11 Social Welfare Facilities for elderly people have been established. In total, 124 people are accommodated in those facilities (as of October, 1999)

(3) The Netherlands

The Government of Japan and the AWF, in consultation with the Dutch people concerned, had explored what appropriate project could be implemented in the Netherlands, where no authorities identify former "wartime comfort women," in order to convey atonement from the Japanese people. As a result, on July 16, 1998, the AWF concluded a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Project Implementation Committee in the Netherlands (PICN) on a project concerning the issue known as "wartime comfort women" aimed at

helping enhance the living conditions of those who suffered incurable physical and psychological wounds during World War II.

In accordance with the MOU, the AWF, making use of a fund disbursed by the Government of Japan, shall provide the PICN with financial support totalling up to 255 million yen over 3 years and the PICN has been implementing the project for 77 beneficiaries.

(4) Programs Underscoring the Lessons of History

Recognizing the importance of passing on the facts related to this issue to the future generations as a lesson of history in order to ensure that such issue may never be repeated, the AWF, in cooperation with the Government of Japan, is actively compiling documents and materials relating to the issue known as "wartime comfort women."

2. Efforts to Address Contemporary Issues Concerning the Honor and Dignity of Women

The Government of Japan considers that it is its responsibility to address contemporary issues related to women, such as violence against women. The Government of Japan is providing financial contributions to the AWF for its activities toward the solution of such issues.

In this context, the AWF has been actively implementing the following activities.

- (1) The organization of international fora (with the Government of the Philippines and the support of international organizations such as UNICEF, ILO, and ESCAP on the theme of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children in November 1997, with the Government of Thailand and international organizations such as ESCAP, ILO, IOM on the theme of International Trafficking in November 1998, with the support of the Government of Japan on the theme of Violence Against Women in September 1999)
- (2) The provision of support to the public relations of other NGOs engaged in various contemporary issues on women through financial assistance.
- (3) The initiation of research and fact-finding projects on

contemporary women's human rights problems, such as violence against women; their causes, and necessary counter-measures and policies.

(4) The initiation of projects to counsel the women suffered from the problems such as violence against women and to research and develop new counseling and mental care techniques to help improve the skills of counselling and health care professionals.

3. Efforts in the Field of Education

The Government of Japan deems it important that the young people who will form the next generation correctly understand the facts of modern Japanese history including the issue known as "wartime comfort women" through school education. This issue is mentioned in nearly all presently used history textbooks for junior high school and Japanese history textbooks for senior high school.

4. Discussions in international human rights fora

In August 1997, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities under the United Nations Commission on Human Rights adopted a resolution, as adopted by the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, which recognized the above-mentioned measures implemented by the Government of Japan in cooperation with the AWF as "positive steps" towards the settlement of this issue.