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**Statement by Ms. Yaeko Sumi  
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**on**

**item66: Rights of indigenous peoples**

**Third Committee**

**68<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

**New York  
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Mr. Chairman,

It is a great honor to speak on behalf of the Government of Japan on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at this third committee.

Japan has steadily put efforts on the indigenous issues after the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the General Assembly in September 2007. In 2008, the Government of Japan recognized Ainu people as an indigenous people. Ainu people have lived in the northern part of the Japanese Archipelago, especially in Hokkaido. They have unique language, distinctive culture and religion.

The Government of Japan thereafter set up the Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy, consisting of several high-level experts, including a representative of Ainu people. In July 2009, the Advisory Council submitted its report that proposed several basic principles of the Ainu policy and recommended measures in various areas, including education, revitalization of Ainu culture, and promotion of industrial development.

The Government of Japan then established the Council for Ainu Policy Promotion, hosted

by the Chief Cabinet Secretary, in December 2009. This was the first official policy-making forum in which several Ainu representatives actively took part. The Council is currently discussing comprehensive and effective measures for the Ainu people to realize the recommendations by the former Advisory Council.

The Government of Japan is working on the two major projects that were proposed by the Advisory Council, and followed by the reports of the Council's Working Group.

The first project is the establishment of the Symbolic Space for the Ethnic Harmony. The Symbolic Space will include an Ainu museum, traditional Ainu houses and studios in which people of all ages can learn the Ainu's unique view on the world and on the environment. We expect that the Symbolic Space like this one will contribute considerably to preserve and succeed the Ainu culture to the next generation. The space is also expected to function as an information hub on the Ainu culture. The Government of Japan has also decided on the Master Plan for the Symbolic Space in July last year. And in September this year, the government released a Roadmap toward the completion and the grand opening of the Symbolic Space in 2020.

The second project is the nationwide survey on the living conditions of Ainu people who reside outside Hokkaido, the first survey of this kind by the Government of Japan. Most Ainu people live in and around Hokkaido. The research is aimed to support all Ainu people in Japan, including those who live far from Hokkaido. The research found gaps in education and the standard of living between Ainu and non-Ainu people in Japan. The Government of Japan is currently considering effective ways to narrow these gaps. And the consultation service for Ainu people was launched on a trial basis from September.

Moreover, the Government of Japan started additional new measures to raise awareness on the Ainu people and its culture.

First of all, more Ainu topics are added in the textbooks for elementary schools, junior high schools and high schools in Japan. Topics include measures taken by the government of Japan after adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Secondly, the Government of Japan set out a raise-awareness campaign with a keyword "irankarapte." "Irankarapte" is "Aloha!" in Ainu language.

And thirdly, the Government of Japan started to take measures to revive the Ainu language which is on the verge of extinction. For instance, the government has launched a survey on how much the Ainu language is carried on to the next generation. It also plans to establish an Ainu archive.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, Japan is working and will continue to work closely with the Ainu people to achieve a society where the diversity of all people is respected, through various policy measures proposed by the Advisory Council responding to the situation surrounding our country and Ainu people, with reference to the United Nations Declaration. Furthermore, Japan is committed to making efforts to tackle many issues faced by the indigenous people in the world, in cooperation with the United Nations and other actors of the international community.

Thank you, chairman.