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peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by New Japan Women’s Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Since its foundation in 1962, the New Japan Women's Association, with its 150,000 members all over Japan, has been working for the abolition of nuclear weapons, rights of women and children, and solidarity of women around the world for peace.

Grave Situation Facing Japan's Agriculture and Rural Women

In Japan, those who make a living mainly by farming are aging very quickly, with 42 percent of them reaching 70 years of age and older, and rural communities are on the verge of collapse. The country's food self-sufficiency rate has dropped to 38 percent in 2016, the worst among the developed countries. All these are the result of the Government policy to abandon smaller-scale family farms as "inefficient", by liberalizing farm import and by consolidating farmland to promote large-scale farming.

Amidst the decline of agriculture, rural women are trying to sustain family farming, engaged not only in crop production but also in direct delivery from the farm, food processing or operation of farmer's restaurant. However, their status remains low, and according to the survey by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in 2016, women make up only 8.1 percent of the agricultural committees.

Sanchoku Movement to Protect Agriculture and Food Safety

Out of the campaign against the liberalization of beef and orange import in the late 1980s, the New Japan Women's Association picked up the slogans of "Safe Food from Japan's Soil," and "Protect Japan's Agriculture and Food Safety" to launch in April, 1990, together with the Japan Family Farmers' Movement (NOUMINREN), a Sanchoku (Direct Delivery) Movement in which consumers can receive products from producers on a regular basis.

In 2005, on the 25th anniversary of the Sanchoku Movement, the two organizations agreed on the "New Joint Goals", and are strengthening efforts to bring younger members in the movement. The New Joint Goals are:

- Producers give top priority to safety in delivering fresh and good agricultural, livestock and marine products to consumers, who eat their products on their part to protect Japan's food, agriculture, food culture and the health of their families;
- Both producers and consumers value opportunities to come together and get to know each other's faces and livelihood, for promoting Sanchoku Movement, which can generate reasonable returns to producers and can foster successors;
- The two organizations hold regular consultations to develop Sanchoku Movement, so that it can contribute to the development of both organizations;
- Through Sanchoku Movement, the two organizations work together to oppose "agriculture policy reform" and Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement (TPP), to achieve "zero nuclear power", and to spread renewable energy, with a view to establishing food sovereignty, promoting reconstruction from the catastrophic disaster, preventing global warming, and creating sustainable and recycling-oriented communities where everyone can shine. The two organizations also make joint efforts to have the State and the electric company to fulfil their responsibilities to restore production bases as well as food safety and security, which were severely damaged by the nuclear accident.

With a growing interest in the safety of food, efforts have spread to provide local farm products to schools for lunch. Since the Sanchoku Movement enables producers to sell their products stably at a decent price, it has helped to foster farm successors. As the Government relaxed the labelling requirements for imported agricultural products and processed food, as well as the pesticide residue standards, different organizations and individuals raised money to introduce a genetically modified organisms analyser and a pesticide residue analyser to the Nouminren Food Analysis Centre.

Amend and Improve the System Hindering Women's Economic Independence

The New Japan Women's Association is carrying forward jointly with other women's groups a petition campaign for revision of article 56 of the Income Tax Act, which makes it difficult for rural women to be independent. Japan's Income Tax Act Article 56 does not recognize the compensation paid to family members of farmers and self-employed individuals for their work as business expenses, and therefore the earnings of family workers, many of whom are women, are included in the income of the business owner. Without being recognized as income earners, these women are not able to obtain income certificate and face disadvantages regarding social security benefits and administrative procedure among other things. In March 2016, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women issued recommendations to the Japanese Government, to reform the pension scheme in order to guarantee the minimum standard of living and to review the Income Tax Act Article 56.

Shift to Renewable Energy

After the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, Japan has frequently been hit by natural disasters including earthquakes, volcano eruption and intensive rainfalls, with enormous damage inflicted on agriculture and local economies. Every time disaster occurs, the New Japan Women's Association launches support activities, and urges the Government to take drastic measures to deal with the damage. The Association members all over Japan go and check the conditions of evacuation centres, earthquake resistance and emergency stock at schools and other public facilities, evacuation routes, and contents of evacuation drills and disaster prevention education in their communities. They bring their findings to municipalities and have gained improvements.

More than six and a half years have passed since the nuclear disaster, 68,000 people of Fukushima Prefecture still live in evacuation, and the disaster is far from over with the whole picture of the accident yet to be uncovered. However, the Government is pushing ahead with the lifting of evacuation orders issued to areas once designated as no-go zones, and terminating the payment of compensation to evacuees. Furthermore, it forces through the reactivation and export of nuclear reactors. The New Japan Women's Association is reinforcing the movement for zero nuclear power, shift to renewable energy and global warming measures.

Call for Initiatives for Putting the Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty into Effect

On July 7, 2017, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted and it has opened for signature with several countries ratifying it. The New Japan Women's Association brought signatures calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons to the United Nations, and its president had a privilege to deliver a statement

at the Conference to negotiate a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, thus contributing to the adoption of the treaty. There are growing concerns and criticism among the Japanese public toward their Government, which, despite being the only country that suffered the atomic bombing in wartime and being at the same time the country that waged war of aggression against its Asian neighbours, opposed the adoption of the treaty and is remaking Japan with the United States into a war-waging nation.

The New Japan Women's Association will continue to urge the Government to play its role as the country having the Constitution that pledges in its Article 9 that Japan forever renounces war, and it will do its utmost to achieve a peaceful, just and sustainable world without nuclear weapons.
