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## **The Third Committee of the 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

by Irene Gashu

### **1. First in-person meeting in 3 years**

In 2020 and 2021, due to the world pandemic of Covid-19, the United Nations General Assembly was held mainly online and it was not possible to send attendees from Japan. Consequently, I could only watch the meetings of the Third Committee from Japan via the internet, which was completely different from actually being there and give statements. With the improvement of the Covid-19 situation in 2022, I was finally able to attend the meetings of the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly which were held in-person after 3 years.

The plenary meetings of the Third Committee of the 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly were held from September 29 to November 17. This time, both the President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Csaba Korosi of Hungary and the Chairperson of the Third Committee, Ambassador Jose Alfonso Blanco Conde of the Dominican Republic, were men. The Ambassador of the Dominican Republic spoke in Spanish, one of the official languages of the UN. It was easy for me to understand because I was born and educated in Argentina and Spanish is my native language.

### **2. Statements and comments**

On September 30, October 6, 10, 12, 21 and 28, I gave the following 6 statements and comments:

- (1) On "Social Development". First, I explained that I was attending the Meeting as the Special Advisor to the Government of Japan on recommendations of the National Women's Committee of the UN NGOs. Then, I added that to achieve social development, Japan will support persons with disabilities, women, food security and universal health coverage.

- (2) On “Advancement of Women”. I talked on the following 4 subjects:
- ① In June 2022, Japan formulated the “Basic Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women”.
  - ② In December, Japan will host the “World Assembly for Women WAW!” to promote women’s empowerment.
  - ③ Prime Minister Kishida assumed the role of a HeForShe champion.
  - ④ The “Women, Peace and Security” agenda is a priority for Japan.
- (3) On “Rights of Children”. In June 2022, Japan enacted the Basic Act on Child Policies and in April 2023, will establish the new Children and Families Agency.
- (4) On “Rights of Indigenous Peoples”. Japan opened the National Ainu Museum and Park “UPOPOY” for the revitalization and development of Ainu culture. Even in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, over 650,000 persons visited UPOPOY.
- (5) On “Rights of Persons with Disabilities”. Japan reconfirmed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in order to realize an inclusive society.
- (6) On “Discrimination of Persons affected by Leprosy”. Japan has been implementing policies to eliminate discrimination against persons with leprosy.

### **3. What left an impression on me**

- (1) The diplomat from Pakistan, Second Secretary Saima Saleem was a visually impaired woman. She read her statements in braille.
- (2) The Peruvian Special Rapporteur Mr. Diego Garcia Sayan said on independence of judges and lawyers: “It is necessary to increase the number of women judges. Even though the number of women judges in relatively low positions is increasing, in the upper echelons is still very low. I am making a closer study of the reasons for this”. He is a man but his research topic is women judges.
- (3) On enforced disappearances, Japan commented on the violation of human rights by the abduction of Japanese citizens, committed by North Korea (DPRK). Later on, DPRK harshly criticized Japan by saying: “Japan is the worst war criminal state and abductor on record. During the occupation of Korea, Japan forcibly abducted and dragged 8.4 million innocent Koreans to its slavery labor sites, killed 1 million of them and forced 200 thousand women into sexual slavery of its army”. Japan immediately refuted this statement.
- (4) Discussion about the use of new inclusive language. For example, all countries agreed that efforts should be done to eliminate violence against women and girls; but

some countries were against the adoption of terms like “women in all their forms”. Russia opposed the terms “femicide” and “female infanticide”. Indonesia was against the use of the terms “multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination”, “intimate partner violence” and other inclusive language. In the end, the resolution was adopted but no consensus was reached. 166 in favour, none against and 14 abstentions.

- (5) The right to food (right to have access to food, or means for its procurement, to ensure ones health and well-being) is a right recognized by all but in the past, of a total of 193 countries, the United States and Israel were the only 2 to vote against the resolution because the draft was introduced by Cuba. This time, both countries did not oppose the resolution probably because of a change of government and finally, a consensus was achieved.
- (6) Listening the statements of each country, I felt the “language inequality”. The official languages of the United Nations are English, French, Russian, Chinese, Spanish and Arabic. There is a big difference between those countries that can give statements in their native language and those that cannot. To eliminate this inequality, it should be forbidden to give statements in their native language.

#### **4. Conclusion**

There are a lot of problems that need to be solved but having had the opportunity to directly meet and hear the reports of experts dealing with various issues concerning human rights and exchange opinions with delegates from all over the world, I realized the significance of participating in the meetings of the Third Committee.

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Translated into English from the original in Japanese by Irene Gashu.