

## **International Seminar on Enforced Disappearances**

Tuesday, 27 February 2018

*Council of Europe, Agora, (Room G02)*

*(Allée des Droits de l'Homme) in Strasbourg*

### **Introductory Speech by Mr. Takamasa SATO, Ambassador-Permanent Observer of Japan to the Council of Europe**

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to deliver an introductory speech, on behalf of the Permanent Observer of Japan to the Council of Europe. At the outset, I would like to extend my gratitude to the *Fondation René Cassin* for hosting, and the Council of Europe for co-sponsoring this seminar. I wish to welcome honorable guest speakers who are legal experts in the area of enforced disappearances and human rights in general, and I am delighted to see many of you here attending this important event.

Japan shares fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law with the fellow members of the Council of Europe, and we follow with great interest the works and activities of the European Court of Human Rights. This seminar is one of the examples where Japan collaborates with the Council of Europe in the intellectual field. We hope it will help foster better understanding of the issue of enforced disappearances, a common interest of the international community.

On 23 July, 2009, Japan deposited the instrument of ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and became a State Party to the Convention. The Convention was promulgated on 22 December, 2010 and entered into force for Japan on 23 December of the same year. Since then, Japan has been supporting the work of the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED) as well as the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID), and actively engaging in discussions. Also, Japan has been sending a Japanese member to the CED since its inauguration. Prof. Kimio Yakushiji, who is here with us today and will give us a presentation later, served as a member for six years for two terms. His task was

succeeded by Prof. Koji Teraya, the incumbent member of the Committee from Japan.

Mr. President,

Enforced Disappearance is an extremely serious violation of human rights, which continues up to the present day. Indeed, at least 17 Japanese citizens were abducted by North Korea in 1970s and 1980s. A Japanese girl, Megumi Yokota was only 13 years old when she was abducted on the way home from school in 1977. While the issue has not yet been resolved, abductees and their families have grown old. Some of the family members have passed away, unable to see their loved ones again. There is no time to waste in resolving the issue.

Mr. President,

Despite the fact, the number of State Parties to the Convention is still low; it remains only 58 as of today. In terms of the Asia-Pacific region, only 7 States are the State Parties. Japan strongly encourages States which have not yet become State Parties to ratify the Convention.

Japan supports the commitment towards universal ratification made by the CED and the WGEID in 2017 to double the number of State Parties to the Convention within 5 years. In this regard, Japan has been conducting outreach activities, including making recommendations in UPR sessions to non-State Parties to conclude the Convention.

In conclusion, I wish you every success in your deliberations, and particularly wish our distinguished guests from abroad a very pleasant stay in Strasbourg.

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