

1 **ACSILs' Statement at UNPFII 2022**

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6 Gusuyo chuu uganabira, hello and warm greetings to all our sisters and brothers in the
7 world.

8 We Ryukyuans are one of two Indigenous peoples in the nation-state of Japan, and
9 although the United Nations recognizes us as such, the government of Japan does not. Japan
10 maintains that “people who live in Okinawa and natives of Okinawa are Japanese nationals”
11 (CCPR/C/JPN/6, para. 337). Additionally, Indigenous Ryukyuans would meet the
12 qualifications for Indigenous recognition set by the Japanese Diet itself when in 2019 it
13 formally recognized the Ainu people of Hokkaido, based on the Ainu having a “Unique
14 language, religion, and culture,” all of which we Ryukyuans have as well.

15 Ryukyu was once an independent nation, having signed international treaties with other
16 nations such as China and Korea, as well as with western countries such as the United States
17 of America, France, the Netherlands, and others.

18 We are here today to emphasize, that while the Ryukyu Islands are today governed as a
19 prefecture, we are not treated as a people equal to the rest of Japan. The Japanese government
20 perpetrates a number of human rights violations and violations against the rights we have
21 per the United Nations Declaration on the Rights on Indigenous Peoples. Today I would like
22 to focus on one of those violations: the ongoing construction of the new military base in Henoko
23 against the will of the Okinawan people and in direct violation of Article 30 of the UNDRIP.

24 More than fifteen percent of Okinawa Island is occupied by U.S. and Japanese military
25 bases, of which the U.S. bases alone amount to 32 military installations. Article 30 of the
26 UNDRIP states that: “Military activities shall not take place in the lands or territories of
27 indigenous peoples, unless justified by a relevant public interest or otherwise freely agreed
28 with or requested by the indigenous peoples concerned.”

29 The Ryukyuan people have not agreed to the construction of another U.S. base. In 2019 an
30 official referendum was held in Okinawa prefecture, in which over 70% of voters voted “No”
31 against the construction of the new military base in Henoko. Despite this, construction has
32 persisted, and in doing so the Japanese government and U.S. military are violating dozens of
33 articles of the UNDRIP including article thirty, as well as articles three, our right to self-
34 determination, and most recently article 12 in regards to our ancestral remains.

35 Last year it was discovered that the government of Japan was planning to use soil
36 containing ancestor remains as landfill for the new base. This soil is from Southern Okinawan
37 Island, and contains thousands of ancestor remains from the battle of Okinawa, a traumatic
38 event that I will remind you was purposefully staged on Okinawa Island as opposed to Japan,
39 and where one fourth of the island's native people were killed by Japanese and American
40 crossfire.

41 The new military base in Henoko is nothing but military expansionism by Japan and the
42 U.S in the Asia Pacific region and in the process are the sacrificing of human rights of us
43 Ryukyuan once again. These are clearly violations against the SDGs, ICESCR articles 1(1)
44 and 13, ICCPR articles 1(1), (2) and 27, and UNDRIP articles 3, 12, 14, and 25 through 32.

45 Furthermore, it has recently been revealed that Ryukyu is facing a serious drinking-water
46 pollution by the toxic chemical compounds PFOS and PFAS that come from U.S. and Japanese
47 military bases and have been known to cause cancer and other illnesses. It has been revealed
48 that this serious pollution has been almost everywhere in Ryukyu for decades. We now must
49 also worry about long-term and serious health hazards to people in the Ryukyu Islands.

50 Speaking of water and toxicity, the Japanese Government is planning to release a huge
51 amount of water contaminated by the Fukushima nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean
52 in 2023. If this is done, people all over the world, not just the indigenous peoples who share
53 the Pacific Ocean, will suffer unimaginable consequences. We believe the world should not
54 allow this to happen.

55 While we face dozens more issues that could and should be addressed here at the forum I
56 will conclude and reiterate that the fundamental human rights issues of the Ryukyuan peoples
57 in Japan should be resolved immediately.

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59 Ippee nifee deebitan

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琉球民族の琉球民族による琉球民族のための学会

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