



Asian NGOs welcomed Japanese government's Commitment to establish an NHRI

10 March 2010

The members of the Asian NGOs Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) welcomed the recent statements by the Japanese government regarding the establishment of national human rights institution (NHRI) in Japan, as well as the commitments expressed by legislators to establish an NHRI at the soonest possible time.

The ANNI calls on the Japanese government to conduct wider consultation with civil society organizations of Japan in this important direction. The ANNI also proposes to the Japanese government to set a clear time line and stages for the process of the establishment of the NHRI.

From 4 to 5 March 2010, the ANNI held its 3rd Regional Consultation in Tokyo, Japan, which was co-organised with ANNI member in Japan, the Citizens' Council for Human Rights Japan (CCHRJ). The two-day consultation was attended by ANNI members from various Asian countries including Hong Kong, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand. Representatives from Japanese civil society groups and the government were also present during this consultation.

Mr. Nobuo Matsuno, a Member of Parliament from the House of Councillors from the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), gave the welcoming remarks. During his speech, he emphasized the importance of creating a mechanism at national level, which protects the victims of human rights violation on the ground, with consultations with civil society groups. He also noted that a number of NGOs in Japan including the Japan Federation of Bar Associations (JFBA) and the Japan chapter of Amnesty International have actively engaged with various human rights issues in Japan, but still, no governmental body which deals with human rights issues has been established. Thus, he views the establishment of an NHRI in Japan as an important task for the Japanese government.

During the consultation, a panel discussion was held which included Mr. Ryoichi Hattori, a Member of Parliament from the House of Representatives from the Social Democratic Party (SDP) of Japan, who talked about the importance of human rights education. This includes education not only at school but also the education for the people who deals with human rights in the field such as judges and public prosecutors. There were also speakers from civil society groups and academics based in Japan, including Amnesty International-Japan, Centre for Prisoners' Right, Japan Federation of Bar Associations (JFBA), and a professor from Senshu University. Prof. Nohyun Kwak, co-chair of the Korean House for International Solidarity (KHIS), gave a substantial discussion on the significant role of NHRIs in the country, as well as the various models of NHRIs in different parts of the world.

During its plenary discussions on its action points for 2010, the ANNI acknowledged that an NHRI in Japan is significant for the region as it has the potential of being a leader in the

cultivation of a culture of human rights in Asia. The establishment of an NHRI in Japan will undoubtedly send a positive signal to the neighboring countries and the international community that Japan is determined to strengthen its commitment to human rights.

The ANNI resolved that it would stand together with civil society in Japan so that the proposed NHRI would be accountable, independent, transparent, and effective.

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