

The Statement by President of the Asian Women's Fund Murayama at the Final Press Conference

6 March 2007

Today, we announce that the Asian Women's Fund completed its last project in Indonesia, and will dissolve on March 31, 2007. We take this opportunity to make several statements.

The Asian Women's Fund started when Chief Cabinet Secretary Kozo Igarashi announced its establishment on June 14, 1995, based on an agreement made in the same year by the three ruling parties. The Fund was established as a means of expressing the government's awareness, remorse and apologies concerning the comfort women issues as expressed in the 1993 statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono on August 4. The Fund had three specific missions: to express atonement to the former comfort women at a national level, combining compensation from citizen donations and medical welfare support from government funds; to collect and edit historical documents related to the issue and use them for historical lessons; to reflect on past mistakes of violating women's dignity and assist in projects that deal with current women's issues such as violence.

The basic idea with the Atonement Project on former comfort women was to hand every former comfort woman a letter of apology from the Prime Minister together with two million yen in compensation and medical welfare support. The amount of medical welfare support was 1.2 million yen in The Philippines and 3 million yen in Korea and Taiwan. We had implemented the project for 285 former comfort women in The Philippines, Korea and Taiwan, and we completed the necessary procedures. In the Netherlands, we conducted medical welfare support worth 3 million yen to each of a total of 79 individuals.

All of the approximately 565 million yen from citizen donations were used as compensation. Approximately 750 million yen from government funds went to medical welfare support.

The Fund was preparing to conduct a similar project in Indonesia, but since the Indonesian government has not identified its comfort women, the Fund came to construct senior welfare facilities at a cost of 380 million yen over ten years. Indonesia's Ministry of Social Affairs overseas 235 welfare facilities across the country, and the Fund assisted in building facilities for 69 of them.

Although most are facilities for general senior citizens, a private organization that

conducts projects for former comfort women established a facility that houses 14 former comfort women, and the Fund built three facilities that were planned by a private organization that worked on comfort women issues. These were very positive results that came in the final fiscal year of the Fund.

In the Historical Lesson Project, the Fund published a five-volume compilation of documents collected and released by the government, and thanks to the generosity of the publishing company, Ryukeishosha, we have created an electronic version of the document to be posted on the website. When the Fund dissolves, we will establish a Digital Museum "Comfort Women Issues and the Asian Women's Fund" on the Internet to be stored in the web archives of the National Diet Library. The address is <http://warp.ndl.go.jp>. We are also considering releasing the site by hosting it on an external server outside the Diet Library.

We hope that this virtual memorial hall long remembers the comfort women issue, and will help promote reconciliation between Asian citizens and the Japanese. We also hope that Japanese citizens and people around the world would likewise visit this site and pass down their insights on the issue of comfort women to the generations that follow.

The Women's Dignity Project reflected on past mistakes and worked on various issues of the time that violate women's dignity. We made an early move on domestic violence issues, educating and training counselors from the perspective of victim support. We held study sessions on women's rights during military conflict, international conferences for the issue of human trafficking, and conducted activities on the issue of women and the judicial system. The number of publications has reached 120, totaling 840,000 copies.

In dissolving the Fund, we take this opportunity to express our heartfelt condolences for the many former comfort women who have passed away. Many more former comfort women live their lives today suffering from age, illness and the burden of inerasable memories from the past. We understand the importance of providing aftercare to these people. The Fund sincerely asks the government to provide warm support to the former comfort women of today so that they may live peacefully.

There are no grounds whatsoever for suspending the activities of the Women's Dignity Project. We ask that the government continue with the work in this field even after the Fund has been dissolved.

In conclusion, we express our sincere gratitude to the citizens who offered donations for the former comfort women and supported the national atonement project, and to everyone who sent us their heartfelt messages. The Asian Women's Fund owes its twelve years of activity to your support.

The accomplishments of the Asian Women's Fund may have been small, but they would not have been possible without your undying support. The feelings of atonement you have indicated to us have provided support and formed the basis of all our activities.

We sincerely wish that this Japanese people's atonement feeling remains in the hearts of people in Asia and around the world.

Thank you.