



NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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**Oral Statement on Agenda Item 3ID – UN Human Rights Council 23rd Session
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Introduction

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

We warmly welcome Special Rapporteur Mr Anand Grover's report on the the rights to health of people affected by the Fukushima nuclear disaster, which provides an important perspective on the evolving and long-term health implications. Although more than two years have passed since the disaster, the report timely reflects the sincere calls and needs of those affected by the disaster and of the broader Japanese civil society.

I am speaking here today on behalf of Peace Boat, a Japan-based international organisation working closely with communities in and from Fukushima. This statement contains reflections also from other civil society colleagues in and evacuated from Fukushima, from broader Japan, and from international public health and medical experts, some of whom are also with us here today.

Concern for International Society

Continued international engagement to encourage the Japanese government to address the challenges and needs posed by the disaster and made clear in the Special Rapporteur's report is now vital. We hope that the Special Rapporteur and the UN Human Rights Council will continue to engage in this issue, and encourage the HRC to consider further follow up and monitoring mechanisms in relation to the implementation of the specified recommendations. The catastrophic nuclear accident in Fukushima is not a local issue but global. Given the indiscriminate, transboundary, intergenerational and initially largely invisible harm posed by radiation; the ongoing releases of radioactivity into the environment from the damaged nuclear plants; and the ongoing risk of further catastrophic releases, the Fukushima disaster is of global concern. It is a constantly evolving manmade disaster that is by no means over. 160,000 people continue to be forced to live in evacuation, and its effects are still felt by approximately 2 million people living in this highly irradiated area.

Ongoing situation – evacuation, compensation, return

The Special Rapporteur's report clearly highlights the extremely difficult situation faced by people affected by the Fukushima nuclear accident even today, and the delay in actions by the Japanese Government to ameliorate the situation addressed in the November 2012 interim report. Indeed, the situation is in many ways actually regressing, with Japanese government moves to return people to the contaminated, evacuated areas, and many cases of eligibility for compensation now being cut off.



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Recent reports in the Japanese media detail that the government avoided setting stringent radiation reference levels for the return of Fukushima evacuees for fear of triggering a population drain and being hit by ballooning costs for compensation – demonstrating the problematic prioritisation of economical concerns rather than the health of the population.

Yet, it is the right of those affected by radiation to resettle in a safe environment with all necessary assistance assured by the authorities. As recommended by the Special Rapporteur, it is necessary to revert the standard back to 1mSv/yr, the Japanese Government's own pre-disaster safety standard, and to expand the health survey and related overall health concerns regarding radiation, including to those not only in and from Fukushima, but all affected populations in eastern Japan. How this issue is dealt with connects directly with concerns of nuclear safety worldwide, and an examination of the rights and of and relief for those affected by the Fukushima nuclear disaster should be the starting point for a reconsideration of security of nuclear power plants internationally.

Measures for relief and information

In regards to such measures for relief, as noted by the Special Rapporteur, the Japanese law “Act on the Protection and Support for the Children and other Victims of TEPCO Disaster” was created in June 2012, yet ministerial ordinances for implementation are still lacking. This should be undertaken expeditiously, with the needs and participation of those affected by the disaster fully taken into account.

As highlighted in the report, affected citizens must be entitled to unrestricted access to accurate and comprehensive information on radiation levels and risks and the evolving situation at the plant from independent sources. The basic health right of people to involvement in decisions affecting their lives must be, “Nothing about us without us.”

Conclusion

The challenges continuing to be faced by those affected by the Fukushima nuclear disaster, and the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur, highlight the urgent need for action, and the tragic risks of the nuclear chain. The so-called “inalienable right” of nations to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy means exposing living things worldwide to a risk of indiscriminate radioactive contamination at any time, erodes the health and rights of future generations, and exacerbates the danger of nuclear war and its catastrophic human consequences. Instead we must highlight human rights that support global health, including the rights to be protected from radioactive contamination, and for people’s involvement in decisions affecting them.

Finally, we would like to once again thank the Special Rapporteur for this report. We look forward to a clear and sincere response from the Japanese Government as to how it will proceed with concrete follow up and implementation of both policy and action on the recommendations, while calling for continued international support and solidarity for those affected by the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Thank you.