

The 46th Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad Convention Declaration

We, volunteers and representatives of Nikkei and Japanese living in various countries abroad, on 13-14 September 2005 opened the 46th Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad in Tokyo. Based upon the general theme of “Challenging the new era: Nikkei communities abroad, their goals and issues,” the convention will debate the following five issues: (1) Establishing trans-generational Nikkei communities, (2) The Convention of Nikkei and Japanese abroad: its future and vision, (3) Development of the Kokusai Nikkei Net, (4) Expectations and support for Nikkei workers, (5) Other issues (the centenary celebration of the Japanese immigration to Brazil, the 50th anniversary of the Japanese-Mexican Association, atomic bomb victims living overseas, old-age pensions for the elderly, the promotion and expansion of overseas voting, support of abandoned Japanese-Filipino children, the understanding and strengthening of relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea, requests for the archiving of resource materials concerning the War Brides’ Conferences in the Overseas Emigration Resource Museum and so on). The convention has formed resolutions for these issues along the lines of the following four areas, and by putting together our requests to the relevant government agencies and Japanese society, issue an eight-point declaration in the name of this convention.

【Resolutions】

(1) We will strive to establish Nikkei communities corresponding to the reality of today’s Nikkei people, including the younger generation.

Since the beginning of the migration of Japanese in the Meiji period and up until today, we, the Nikkei people, have been working to promote the nurturing of our descendants, and endeavoring to ensure that Nikkei communities are maintained and developed and that exchange with Japan does not disappear. However, as these descendants become third-, fourth-, and fifth-generation, it is impossible to deny the reality that a gap is appearing between the younger generation and the middle-aged and elderly generations, with the younger generation’s sense of identity as Nikkei becoming weaker and an increasing tendency for them to pull away from the Nikkei community. At this convention, we earnestly debated this problem; and with the objective of making Nikkei communities more inclusive of this group as the younger Nikkei generation, we have

concluded that the following points are necessary: (1) Most importantly, human resources development, the heart of which is Japanese language education, (2) Regarding the employment of Nikkei in Japan, finding solutions to the various issues connected with this and ensuring that such employment is simple and stable, (3) Japanese companies expanding their businesses overseas should be proactive in employing skilled Nikkei in responsible positions of great importance, (4) Strengthening exchanges between the younger generation and Japan, and allowing them to maintain and develop Japan's great culture. We intend to put forth our every effort in the cause of these objectives and issues. In particular, regarding the preeminently important issue of Japanese language education, following on from the resolution of last year's convention, we will cooperate with our mother country Japan to strongly promote the enhancing of Japanese language education for Nikkei. With regard to this, we will continue to offer our comprehensive cooperation to the Japanese government's economic and technical cooperation operations that emphasize such issues as human resources development programs for children of Nikkei which include Japanese language education, and policies for the elderly.

(2) The Nikkei communities must endeavor to play a proactive role in the staging of the Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad.

The Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad, held once a year in the Japanese capital Tokyo, is a vital tie between these communities and the mother country Japan, and we feel that continuing it is extremely important for the maintenance and development of the Nikkei communities. Currently, at the Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad, which was, with the assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), held under the auspices of the Nikkei Foundation, the Nikkei who attend are in a sense attending in the position of "guests." However, for the Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad to be true to its name, the Nikkei must take a proactive role. The chairing of the convention by a Nikkei since the 45th Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad last year is an indication of progress in this regard. However, this year's conference debated keenly as to what specific policies were needed in order to promote this further. It was agreed that a strengthening of ties between the Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad and the Nikkei communities was necessary. The Steering Committee meeting "For partnership between the Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad and overseas Nikkei communities" held on the morning of the first day of the convention and the Youth

Conference held at the initiative of the younger Nikkei generation under the theme “The role of the next Nikkei generation,” represent a first step towards this.

(3) We will continue to promote the establishment of the “Kokusai Nikkei Net.”

On 2 February 2005, with the president of the Nikkei Foundation as its chair, the Kokusai Nikkei Net Council, which centered on the Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad and has as its aim the establishment of the “Kokusai Nikkei Net,” a global information network linking Nikkei communities all around the world, was established within the Yokohama Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad as we agreed in the resolutions of last year’s 45th Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad. Active efforts are being made to establish the network. Minister for Foreign Affairs Nobutaka Machimura said yesterday in his greetings to the Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad, “I believe that in an international society in which globalization and interdependent relations are progressing step by step, establishing an information network that will strengthen ties by creating links between Nikkei communities and also between Nikkei and the Japanese is of the utmost importance.” We also believe this; thus, by giving support across the board to the activities of the Kokusai Nikkei Net Council, using the already existing networks of the Pan American Nikkei Association and the Brazil Japan Culture Association as a reference, and with the cooperation of those organizations, we are continuing to make progress towards the establishment of the Kokusai Nikkei Network. The activities of the council are currently receiving a great deal of support. However, according to the Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad which is the core of the council, regarding the administration of the establishment of the system, the association has reached a state where it can no longer depend upon funds donated by companies as was its original policy, and the association has difficulty covering activities with its own funds. The association explained that the council must therefore approach the various relevant national and local government organizations with its basic policy of endeavoring to establish this network, an idea that was assented to by the convention.

(4) We welcome Nikkei in the role of workers in Japan, and are making every possible effort to find solutions to the various problems which have arisen from such employment, and to make their employment simple and stable.

We strongly welcome the contribution which the employment of Nikkei within Japan

makes towards the strengthening of understanding and good relations between Japan and overseas Nikkei communities, and through this, Nikkei communities' adopted countries. For this reason, and in order to make the employment of Nikkei in Japan simple and stable, we believe that the most important thing is preparatory education prior to Nikkei's arrival in Japan. In particular now, with regard to a significant problem that has been raised regarding this employment, namely "a feeling that there is a lack of harmony between Nikkei and Japanese," we will make every possible effort to ensure that Nikkei participate in specific activities such as the payment of public welfare expenses like taxation, health insurance and pensions, in order to ensure such harmony. Regarding the various problems of Nikkei worker employment, social welfare and the crucially important education of children, we are now endeavoring to provide solutions to problems by enhancing and strengthening still further both the quality and quantity of the ongoing gathering of information, and of the preparatory education for Nikkei prior to their arrival in Japan, as well as thoroughly eliminating immoral agents.

【Requests】

(1) For the establishment of Nikkei communities corresponding to the reality of the new age

For the establishment of Nikkei communities which correspond to the reality of today's Nikkei people including the younger generation, we desire that Japanese companies be proactive in employing skilled Nikkei for responsible positions of great importance, and request the support and cooperation of Japanese government, relevant Japanese organizations, and Japanese society regarding the strengthening of exchanges between Japan and Nikkei communities and the employment of Nikkei within Japan.

(2) For the promotion of Japanese language education

We continue to request the assistance of the Japanese government, relevant organizations and particularly Japanese companies and universities with regard to the promotion of Japanese language education.

(3) Cooperation and assistance for the centenary celebration of Japanese immigration to Brazil

In recognition of the importance of the 2008 centenary celebration of the Japanese immigration to Brazil which will take place in three years time, we again ask for cooperation and support.

(4) Cooperation and assistance for the 50th anniversary of the Japanese-Mexican Association in 2006

Next year (2006) on July 27, the Nikkei community in Mexico will celebrate the 50th anniversary of its foundation. It is impossible to imagine the present Mexican Nikkei community without the existence of the Japanese-Mexican Association. The association's 50th anniversary is of great significance with regard to the future maintenance and development of the Mexican Nikkei community, and we request the cooperation and assistance of Nikkei communities around the world including our mother country Japan.

(5) Relief for aging first-wave immigrants and atomic bomb victims

It is said that although a few of the first-wave immigrants to Brazil have been very successful, many others would not be able to enjoy a decent quality of life if it were not for the generous relief of the Japanese government, and in particular the conditions for the victims of the atomic bomb would be harsh. The Japanese government is providing these people, if they come to Japan, with old age pensions and atomic bomb victim aftercare; however, we urge taking this one step further and making it possible for such people to register at their local consulate or embassy and be provided with such relief.

(6) Promoting participation in overseas voting

It is wonderful that in the fifth balloting by overseas voters in the election of the House of Representatives held in September, the numbers of voters rose; however, the estimated rate of registration was just over 10%, while the voting rate was no more than one quarter of that number. We call upon our fellow overseas Japanese to take part in overseas voting; however, the reason for the low registration and voting rate is the cumbersome procedure still used in the postal voting system. We strongly request the reformation of the system to make overseas voters more willing to vote and also make it possible for overseas voters to vote in local elections. It was ruled in the High Court that to disallow overseas voting in local elections was unconstitutional. Based upon this, we

desire the Japanese government to enact as soon as possible the bill which will allow overseas voters to vote in local elections as well. Also, it may be added that as a result of the experience of the overseas voter who ran in the regular election of the House of Councilors in July last year, there is an increasing awareness among overseas voters that interest of voters within Japan towards overseas voters is extremely low, and that the realization of overseas voting in local elections is the only way to make the voice of overseas voters heard directly in the Diet.

(7) The War Brides' Conference resource materials

The international marriages which followed World War II and involved primarily Japanese women constitute but one portion of the story of Japanese emigration. However, we were requested by the War Brides' Conference that the valuable resource materials on this topic, including related newsletters, be archived in the JICA Yokohama Overseas Emigration Museum. This convention supports this request, and asks that the JICA office deal with the request accordingly.

(8) Extending caring support towards Japanese-Filipino children abandoned by Japanese fathers

In the Philippines, there are many Japanese-Filipino children who have been abandoned by Japanese fathers who were stationed in the country as employees. Whilst imploring these fathers to reflect upon their actions, we also appeal for Japanese society to extend its caring support towards these children.

September 14, 2005

The 46th Convergence of Japanese and Nikkei Abroad