

## The 47th Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad Conference Declaration

We, volunteers and representatives of Nikkei and Japanese living in various countries abroad, during the three day period from September 26<sup>th</sup> through the 28<sup>th</sup> of 2006 held the 47th Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad in Tokyo. Based upon the general theme of “Aiming for the new development of the Nikkei community--Looking back on our history, turning it into the energy towards tomorrow” the convention debated the following three issues: (1) Studying the history of the Nikkei community (2) The new development of the Nikkei community (1. Bringing the younger generation into Nikkei society. 2. Enriching Japanese language education. 3. Supporting Nikkei working in Japan. 4. Establishing Kokusai Nikkei Net.), (3) Other issues (Plans to hold 2007’s Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad in Sao Paolo, Brazil in conjunction with the 14th Biennial Convention of the Pan American Nikkei Association ; reforms of overseas voting system; support of abandoned Japanese-Filipino children; employment problems for Nikkei Koreans; etc.) As stated below, the convention has formed six resolutions, and by putting together our requests to the relevant government agencies and Japanese society, issue a two-point declaration in the name of this convention.

### Resolutions

(1) We will study the history of the Nikkei community and Japanese migration abroad and, drawing on its lessons and turning them into energy toward new development and prosperity in the Nikkei community.

It has already been 138 years since Japanese migration overseas began with the immigrations to Hawaii in the first year of the Meiji period. This year, various ceremonies were held to commemorate events including the 50th anniversary of the migration to the Dominican Republic, a history filled with hardship, on June 29th; on July 27<sup>th</sup> there was a ceremony for the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Mexican Nikkei national organization, the Japanese-Mexican Association; and on September 8<sup>th</sup> a commemoration took place for the 70th anniversary of the migration to Paraguay, which made a large contribution to the country’s farming industry.

In addition, on October 7th, there are plans to hold a commemorative event in Canada for the 100th anniversary of the founding of the “Vancouver Japanese Language School & Japanese Hall,” and in Brazil preparation is well under way for a commemorative

ceremony honoring the 100th anniversary of migration to Brazil to be held in the capital Brasilia on June 18th of the year after next.

These anniversary events give Nikkei an opportunity to reflect upon the history of the Nikkei community. At meetings with the recently retired Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi and also on other occasions, the presidents of Japanese immigrants' host countries highly praised contributions to the prosperity of the Nikkei communities' host countries and the Nikkei. We welcomed this praise with gratitude, and considered ways in which we could continue to be praised despite the alarming tendency of younger generations to increasingly separate from the Nikkei community and the Japanese language. To find the answer to that question, we looked back at the history of the Nikkei community. We found that this high assessment came from, first and foremost, diligence, integrity, strong will, and outstanding ability achieved through education, as well as acclimatizing to our host countries' societies and coexisting with them, in other words, this evaluation arose from the spirit of compliance that is a unique characteristic of the Nikkei.

At the same time, we are certain that this praise is the result of overall efforts by the Nikkei community and Japan. That is to say, private organizations such as the Association of Japanese and Nikkei abroad; governmental organizations such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the prefectures, and the Japanese government, all of which have supported the Nikkei community, Nikkei, and Japanese abroad in good faith. Crucial too are the efforts of the Japanese Association, Nikkei Association, Prefectural Associations, and various other Nikkei associations, which having earned understanding and cooperation of the community, encouraged the unique characteristics of Nikkei, maintained the bond with our mother country Japan, and strove to develop and maintain good relations between Japan and our host countries. This is the starting point of the development of the Nikkei community.

Hereafter, we resolve, with the support and cooperation of the mother country Japan, to work to strengthen the various Nikkei community organizations such as the Japanese associations, Nikkei associations, and prefectural associations, as well as the progress of Nikkei and our unique characteristics.

(2) As a part of that effort, we will, first, promote the proactive participation of the younger generation as Nikkei in the Nikkei community. We will aggressively encourage

the new generation to take over as the core of the Japanese Association, Nikkei Association, and other Nikkei community organizations, and aim to strengthen them.

The maintenance and development of the Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad is not possible without the strength of a younger generation of successors. We have constantly endeavored to cultivate our successors. However, as these descendants become third, fourth, and fifth-generation, it is an unfortunate reality that the younger generation's sense of identity as Nikkei is becoming weaker and there is an increasing tendency for them to pull away from the Nikkei community.

At the 46th Convention last year, regarding this problem we resolved to "strive to establish Nikkei communities corresponding to the reality of today's Nikkei people, including the younger generation," but at this conference, because of the importance of the Nikkei community shown by history, we have focused on this problem. The Youth Conference centered on the youngest generations studying in Japan which initially took place at the previous conference was held again. During this conference, we listened to presentations and debated concrete measures for improving the situation.

According to the Youth Conference's presentations, there are various reasons for the youngest generation's separation from the Nikkei community, but what caught our attention was that the gap between the young, middle, and older generations is large, and as a result, the younger generation has many non-Japanese friends, and Nikkei social activities are becoming less attractive. The reality is that even if they do participate in Nikkei social activities, it is frequently the case that the members of the leadership will not interact with them. Therefore, while encouraging the younger generation to understand the significance of the Nikkei community, we will proactively promote the involvement of the next generation in the Nikkei communities' various organizations and engage in more active exchange with non-Nikkei communities.

(3) We will give our fullest energy to Japanese language education for Nikkei.

For the new prosperity of the community of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad, we must maintain and develop the bonds and close connections between the mother country Japan and the Nikkei community. The basis for this is Nikkei acquiring the Japanese language, and then through Japanese, learning about and understanding various aspects of Japan, beginning with its culture. By studying the Japanese language, those who live

abroad can understand and acquire the excellent spiritual characteristics of the Japanese people and establish an identity as Nikkei. It is essential to acquire Japanese for those who are studying and working in Japan. Japanese language education is extremely important for spreading Japanese culture to our host countries, making Japan understood. It is also important to maintain and develop good relationships between host countries and Japan, which is a basic condition of a durable Nikkei community.

At this conference, Sachiko Sakayori, a teacher at the Vancouver Japanese Language School & Japanese Hall, spoke on the topic of “Enriching Japanese Language Education.” She spoke from the position of a teacher actively engaged in Japanese education in the Nikkei community and emphasized the “importance of students being conscious that they are Nikkei.” Later, the Director of the Hiromi Tani Brazil Japanese Language Center proposed a plan to establish an “Intensive Japanese Language Cram School for Working in Japan” The conference supported the plan and resolved to cooperate toward it.

However, there are many difficulties with Japanese language education abroad. Without the support and cooperation of Japan, the mother country, it will not fully succeed. We are hoping for strong support for training Japanese language teachers for the Nikkei community and an improvement of the system for studying in Japan. In that sense, there are great expectations for the proactive activities of the “Inheritance Japanese Language Center” established last year by the Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad.

In addition, in the Nikkei community, even if one learns the Japanese language, there are few opportunities to use it. There are concerns that it is more advantageous to study English as a foreign language than Japanese. On this point, we are hoping that Japanese enterprise will proactively employ Nikkei who learn Japanese. Furthermore, at this meeting, we would like to add that one reason that was given for the distancing of the younger generation from the Nikkei community is the decrease in study abroad opportunities in Japan.

(4) We recognize that Nikkei workers in Japan make a large contribution to Japan’s prosperity, and they strengthen the bond between the mother country of Japan and the Nikkei community. We will make further efforts to grapple with the various problems that arise when working in Japan and make work simpler and more stable. In addition, we hope that there will be no change in the Japanese government’s current foreign

worker policy, which gives preference to Nikkei.

We fully recognize and anticipate that the 370,000 Nikkei workers currently in Japan, as has been acknowledged by the Japanese economic world, make a large contribution to the Japanese economy. They strengthen the bond between the mother country Japan and the Nikkei community. Consequently they contribute to the development and maintenance of amicable relations between Japan and the countries where Nikkei communities are located.

However, it is also true that Nikkei work in Japan as foreigners, and they create many problems such as friction with the work places' local communities, intervention of immoral agents, employment of camouflaged Nikkei, a rash of crimes by Nikkei in Japan, neglect of workers' children's education, and so on. We will endeavor further to solve these problems and provide workers with peace of mind. To that end, preparatory education in each Nikkei community, with particular emphasis on Japanese language and coexisting with the workers' local communities, can help to avoid tension with workers' local communities and reduce crime.

With the cooperation of Japan's overseas diplomatic offices, it is also possible to eliminate immoral agents and camouflaged Nikkei workers by conducting sufficient preliminary examinations. Currently, the largest problem facing the Nikkei workers, that of workers' children's education being neglected is currently considered to be the individual worker's problem. However, this problem can, to an extent, be solved by establishing facilities that can provide preparatory consultation to Nikkei communities.

Whatever the case, cooperation from Japan is essential to addressing these problems. We hope for proper measures to be taken by Japan's government, other related organizations, and the business community. There have been some claims that the problems caused by Nikkei workers show that priority treatment for Nikkei foreign workers has been a failure, but it cannot be disputed that the demerits of Nikkei workers are far outweighed by their benefits. On this point, we strongly desire that the current policy of giving priority treatment to Nikkei workers, which has been in place since 1991, remains unchanged.

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

In February of last year, with the president of the Nikkei Foundation as its chair, the Kokusai Nikkei Net Council, spoke of their aim of establishing the “Kokusai Nikkei Net,” a global information network linking Nikkei communities all around the world centered on the Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad. It was established within the Yokohama Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad as was agreed in the resolutions of the 45<sup>th</sup> Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad held the year before last.

Active efforts have been made to establish the network. In an international society in which globalization and interdependent relations are increasingly progressing, without argument it is extremely important to establish an information network that will strengthen ties by creating links among Nikkei communities and also between Nikkei and the Japanese. We give our full support to the activities of the Kokusai Nikkei Net Council, and using the 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, since last year, the association can no longer depend upon funds donated by companies for the establishment and administration of the system, as was its initial policy. As a result the association has difficulty covering activities with its own funds. Therefore, the Association has laid down its basic policy of working towards the network’s completion through approaching various national and local government organizations. The Association has explained to the conference that it has been actively pursuing this policy but it has not yet yielded results that were accepted by the convention.

(6) We agree to accept the proposal of the Pan American Nikkei Association to hold the 2007 48th Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad in conjunction with the 14th Biennial Convention of the Pan American Nikkei Association in July of the same year in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

The majority of the Conventions of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad, from the first in 1957 until this 47<sup>th</sup> convention, have been held in Tokyo. Only once has the Convention been held abroad: in 1968 during the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the migration to Hawaii, the 9<sup>th</sup> Convention was held in Honolulu, Hawaii. Felix Shingo Kasamatsu, a representative from the Pan American Nikkei Association to the 46<sup>th</sup> Convention last year, approached the Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad about holding the meetings together. The discussion bore fruit, and the meetings will finally be held together.

The population of Nikkei in Brazil is approximately 1,400,000, accounting for 54% of the total of approximately 2,600,000 Nikkei worldwide. The Nikkei population is focused in Sao Paulo. In addition, because Brazil is moving towards the centenary celebration of Japanese immigration to Brazil in 2008, we consider it appropriate and right occasion to hold the convention in conjunction with the Pan American Nikkei Association, the convention for Nikkei from every country in the Americas.

#### Requests

(1) 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 two years time, we again ask for cooperation and support.

(2) For the promotion of participation in overseas voting.

On September 14<sup>th</sup> of last year, the day the Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad was held, the Japanese Supreme Court ruled in a historical decision finding it unconstitutional to not recognize the right of Japanese nationals abroad to vote in local elections. We, who had endeavored to realize local elections, welcomed this news. However, based on this decision, on June 9<sup>th</sup> of this year, the Diet completed a revised Public Office Election Act, which, from our perspective, was making a change for the worse. That is to say, the voting period, which was from the day after the election was announced until five days before the election in Japan, was shortened to six days before the election. We have taken every opportunity to request that the number of voting locations be increased and the voting period extended, but the result was a one day cut in the voting period. The government administration should consider how important this one day is for oversea voters. On this point, we ask that the provision regarding voting period of the former law should be applicable or, if we are discussing our wishes, that it

should be extended.

September 27, 2006

The 47th Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad