

Oral Statement of Ms. Yuriko Moto of International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism – on the right of political participation

Women of ethnic and social minorities in Japan are the least represented and their voices are rarely heard. They are women belonging to indigenous Ainu and Okinawan people, so-called Buraku people who are discriminated against on the ground of descent like Dalit people of India and Nepal, and Koreans and other citizens of foreign nationals including migrant workers.

There are various reasons for it, but major obstacle is the Japanese government's reluctance to tackle the problems faced by those minority women and improve their human rights situation. The government of Japan still denies the existence of minority groups, except for the indigenous Ainu people, that are entitled to the protection under Article 27 of the ICCPR, despite repeated recommendations made by its treaty body. It shows little interest in knowing the realities and needs of minority women and has neglected in taking disaggregated data despite repeated requests made by NGOs. Minority women have been largely overlooked in formulating policies relating either to gender equality or disadvantaged communities. Since the status of women of Japan has been and still is the lowest among the industrialized countries and the government has taken certain legislative and other measures to improve the situation. Yet, minority women have hardly benefitted from those measures and remain as minority of minorities.

The other obstacle is the difficulty in changing the male dominance of the minority communities. Women are too often excluded from decision making procedures in the communities. But it must be added that thanks to the development at the UN, minority women have increasingly been empowered by the concept of multiple or intersectional discrimination and it has prompted, even if gradually, the change of male members' attitude.