



Kyoto Appeal on the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

On December 10, 1948, the 3rd General Assembly of the United Nations, drawing on the lessons learned from the Second World War and its horrors, adopted the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. In its preamble, upon the realization that “... recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”, the Declaration proclaimed that the UN countries “... have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights reflects the long-standing yearning of humankind for freedom, justice, and peace in its every Article. Article 1 states, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” The last article, Article 30, asserts, “Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying ... any right to engage in ... the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein”.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration. During these years, the two International Covenants as well as other human rights treaties have come into force to help realize the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The 49th General Assembly established “The United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education” and adopted its “Plan of Action”.

In Japan, policies for the protection of human rights and the solution of various human rights problems have been promoted in pursuance of the human rights provisions of the Japanese Constitution.

Following the announcement of “An Appeal from Kyoto Prefecture on the 55th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights” on November 30, 2003, Kyoto Prefecture has adopted the “New Kyoto Prefecture Human Rights Education and Enlightenment Plan” and Kyoto City has developed the “Kyoto City Human Rights Culture Promotion Plan” in order to expand human rights education and enlightenment activities more comprehensively and systematically with the assistance of advisory organs and through the dialogue with residents. Furthermore, based on the Civil Liberties Commission System, which also marks the 60th anniversary of its foundation this year, the Kyoto Prefecture Human Rights Protection Federation and the Kyoto District Legal Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Justice have made specific community-based efforts to further develop activities for the protection of human rights. In addition, all these organizations have collaborated for extending human rights education together with consultation and relief services.

Through the constant efforts of countless people who strive for the resolution of human rights problems and the progress of these policies, conditions of human rights have been steadily improving. At the same time, however, various forms of discrimination that pose a threat to peace and human rights such as intensifying conflicts, destruction of the environment, famine, poverty, and deprivation of life and dignity have grown increasingly serious.

In order to make the 21st century a bright new century of human rights, we must endeavor to establish a fresh culture of human rights, reaffirm the spirit and significance of the Universal Declaration, and build a free, righteous and peaceful society rooted in homes, schools, workplaces and communities.

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