

The First Conference of Museums on Japan's Military “Comfort Women” Declaration

The world’s first Conference of Museums on Japan’s Military “Comfort Women” convened in the offending nation of Japan with participation from South Korea, China, Taiwan, the Philippines and the United States.

When South Korean “Comfort Woman” victim KIM Hak-sun stepped forward on August 14, 1991 to question the responsibility of the Japanese government, a long history of silence was broken. In the years since, the contours of a vast system of sexual slavery operated by the Japanese military extending to virtually every corner of Asian Pacific territory under the control of its invading forces have become clear as the result of additional testimonies from victims who came forward one after another, coupled with steady progress in historical research.

At the center of the movement have always been the victims themselves bravely raising their voices. From these gentle and strong survivors’ painful but courageous testimonies, overcoming the burden of the trauma from the brutal past sexual violence beyond description, we have learned the meaning of human dignity and courage.

We have been putting pressure on the Japanese government to accept responsibility for these grave violation of women’s rights; however, it wants to distort and forget the past history. In the face of the Japanese government’s campaign to deny the history, the role of museums has become even more crucial not only for the education our next generation of the values of peace and human rights, but also for the recovery of the survivors.

Sprouted since the latter half of the 1990s, the “Comfort Women” museums will preserve the memory of the survivors of the “Comfort Women” victims. The Conference of Museums on Japan's Military “Comfort Women” declares that we shall continue to act in solidarity in order to carry forward to create a peaceful world free from war that respects the human rights of women.

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Adopted at the First Conference of Museums on Japan's Military “Comfort Women”