

## **To the Leaders of the G7 Member States at the G7 Ise-Shima Summit: Call for Policy-making and Enhanced International Collaboration on Immigration and Refugee Issues**

Current situation in the region hosting this Summit

The host country of the summit, Japan, is home to 2.23 million foreign residents hailing from 194 countries as of late 2015. Within Japan, the host region of the summit, Mie Prefecture and its neighboring prefectures (Aichi Prefecture, Gifu Prefecture and Shizuoka Prefecture), are home to 17% of these foreigners, totaling about 380,000 people. In terms of ratio of foreign residents to the total population, Aichi ranks second while Mie is in third position. As such, foreign residents have become an essential presence in the maintenance and development of local communities. Nevertheless, Japan is the only country among the G7 that does not have a defined and established immigration policy. In the MIPEX immigration policy evaluation of 38 countries, Japan came in 27<sup>th</sup> place, the lowest rank among the G7 states. The problems lie in many areas, from the language barrier to disparities in work environment, lack of understanding and bias against various religions, and wide gaps in school enrollment and participation in higher education between Japanese and foreign youth.

The need for global efforts

In recent years, while the surge in refugees in the Middle East region has been recognized as an urgent issue, there are still outstanding and unresolved refugee issues in regions like Tibet, Myanmar (Burma) and many other countries. About 20 million people have been forced to move beyond national borders due to conflicts and persecution. We therefore call on the G7 member states to adopt coordinated policies to reduce the number of refugees, and to serve as models to the rest of the world regarding refugee and immigration policy. The countries within the G7 – except for Japan – have in place relevant policies in the legal system (immigration laws, social integration, etc.) and these policies are subject to enforcement and review. However, in recent years, there has been a sharp increase in the number of people crossing international borders, with international migration reaching 2.3 billion people in 2013. Therefore, the need for international cooperation on migrants and refugees has become extremely urgent.

In view of the above mentioned, we the following civil society organizations appeal to the respective governments of the G7 member states, especially the host country Japan, to adopt the recommendations listed below rapidly and practicably.

Recommendation 1: Recognize and inform the public about immigrants and refugees within the society.

(1) It is the responsibility of governments to inform local residents accurately that refugees and immigrants are residing in and participating actively in community life.

Recommendation 2: Tackle the issue of immigration directly, and formulate policies on immigration

(1) Accept migrants as human beings with dignity rather than as a source of cheap labor.  
(2) In particular, the Japanese government must share the same definition of 'immigrants' as the United Nations, and recognize "foreign technical trainees" as immigrants.

Recommendation 3: Proactively resolve refugee issues

(1) Proactively address refugee issues without limits on their country or region of origin  
(2) Learn from precedents and past experiences of local and international communities  
(3) Establish policies ensuring that while new migrants preserve their own ethnic identities, mother tongues and cultures, they also get used to the languages, cultures and customs of the region to which they migrate, and take a long-term view of how immigrants and refugees can contribute to the development of the receiving country

Recommendation 4: To address the issues of multicultural societies

(1) Guarantee the human rights of each individual, including migrants and refugees  
(2) Establish laws regarding race, ethnicity and religions, all of which work towards the protection of the individuals  
(3) Establish an outlook of cultural relativism  
(4) Formulate and review policies that allow migrants and refugees to contribute to and grow attachment to the local community; differences in language and customs should not hinder their manifestation of abilities  
(5) Political issues and foreign affairs should not threaten the safety and security of individuals who live in their own country  
(6) Disseminate and share unbiased information, thinking beyond political interests  
(7) Actively implement education for human rights and international understanding at

schools and in the community

(8) Provide adequate opportunities for immigrants and refugees to learn the language and social knowledge of their new country

(7) Commit to the resolution of immigration and refugee issues on the basis of dialogue, and establish venues for such dialogue between the government and residents

In the face of rapid globalization, trans-border migration is likely to further intensify in future years. Especially in light of these global trends, we in civic society call on international society to collaborate to guarantee dignity and fundamental human rights for all.

■ respectfully

- Bolivian Residents Association in Japan
- Children and Women Islamic Association
- Door to Asylum Nagoya
- Gaikokujin Helpline Tokai
- Nagoya NGO Center
- Resource Center for Multicultural Community Tokai
- Students for a Free Tibet Japan Mie chapter
- Civic Institute for Civil Society
- MIE NPO Network Center
- Association of Yokkaichi NPOs
- Universal Working Center
- NPO aidensya
- Lung-ta Project
- Lilio Environmental Forum
- Asian Health Institute
- Africa Japan Forum
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