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It is the wish of this delegation to reaffirm its full support for the work of UNGEGN both in terms of substance and procedure, which has also been the case for the past decades. In this regard, this delegation finds it quite regretful that the Japanese delegation continues to mischaracterize the International Seminar on Sea Names as “political propaganda.” On the contrary, the seminar has been steadily developing into a meaningful forum for discussing general issues on the international standardization of geographical names since its inception in 1995.

Having said that, this delegation would also like to make a couple of comments for clarification and rectification regarding the misleading claim from the Japanese delegation about the name of the sea area between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago. In this vein, this delegation further reaffirms its position that the names “East Sea” and “Sea of Japan” should be used concurrently.

First, the concept of “the only internationally established name” seems to exist only in the imagination of a certain delegation, detached from stark reality. It goes without saying that the name of a geographical feature shared by two or more states should be decided through consultation among the states concerned, which has long been the general practice in international cartography as well. When states are unable to reach an agreement, concurrently using all the names in use by the countries concerned is recommended. This rule of international cartography is confirmed in relevant international resolutions, including, first and foremost, UNCSCG Resolution III/20 and IHO Resolution 1/1972. Moreover, unlike what the delegation tries to make us believe, using the name “Sea of Japan” for the sea area between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago has never been the official position of the United Nations. If any, it has been a mere internal practice of the Secretariat for its own convenience.

Second, denying the use of a name that reflects an integral part of cultural heritage and identity goes against the fundamental spirit of UNGEGN of achieving standardization of geographical names in an inclusive and integrated manner. As it has been repeatedly pointed out, the name “East Sea” has been used for more than 2,000 years and is deeply rooted in the culture and history of the Korean people. In this respect, it merits our full attention that an increasing number of cartographers and publishers in the international community are using “East Sea” and “Sea of Japan” concurrently in recognition and appreciation of the historic and cultural value of the name “East Sea,” let alone the safety aspect of navigation.



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In sum, this delegation cannot put too much emphasis on the legitimacy of the name “East Sea” derived from both history and reality. In addition to that, concurrent use of all legitimate names for a certain geographical feature, in the absence of an agreement, is backed by relevant resolutions of international organizations, and is thus the simplest and most reasonable way to prevent the politicization of the issue, which none of us entertains.

With this in mind, this delegation, as it has done, will spare no effort to resolve any issue through sincere and constructive consultations with any delegation concerned.

Submitted on:

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STATEMENT/INTERVENTION