

**RESEARCH ON
THE AGED SOCIETY WITH
A DECLINING BIRTHRATE
AND
A SOCIETY OF
A COOPERATIVE WAY OF LIFE**

(INTERIM REPORT)

SUMMARY

June 2008

CONTENTS

I.	Process of the Committee’s Research.....	1
II.	Outline of the Committee’s Research.....	3
	“Restoring and Strengthening Communities”	3
	1. Hearings with Government Representatives and Main Q&A.....	3
	2. Hearings with Voluntary Testifiers and Main Q&A.....	13
	3. Free Discussion among Committee Members.....	37
III.	Proposals on Coexistence with Foreigners.....	40
Appendix		
	List of Members of Research Committee on Aged Society with Declining Birthrate and Society of Cooperative Way of Life.....	45

I. Process of the Committee's Research

The House of Councillors Research Committee on the Aged Society with a Declining Birthrate and a Society of a Cooperative Way of Life was established on October 5, 2007, during the 168th session of the Diet to undertake a long-term, comprehensive study on Japan's falling birth rate and aged society, and on building an integrated society.

Deliberations at directors' meetings held subsequent to the establishment of the Committee resulted in the selection of "restoring and strengthening communities" as the Committee's central research theme, with the study to be based on hearings with government representatives and voluntary testifiers.

During the 168th Diet session, the Committee heard explanations from government representatives on November 7, 2007, on the status of government efforts to restore communities, and then questioned those representatives on November 7 and 21.

During the 169th ordinary Diet session, the Committee invited three voluntary testifiers to give their views on February 20, 2008, on the subject of coexistence with foreigners in the community, followed on February 27 by three testifiers addressing coexistence with foreigners in the labor market, three testifiers on April 9 addressing the education of foreign children and others, and three testifiers on April 16 addressing social security for foreign workers. Each of these sessions was followed by questions from the Committee.

On April 23, questions were also put to the government on the status of government efforts in regard to the education of foreign children and others and social security for foreign workers.

Drawing on these hearings with government representatives and voluntary testifiers, on May 14, 2008, Committee members engaged in free discussion toward compilation of an interim report.

Further deliberations at directors' meetings based on the above produced a summary of immediate challenges in coexistence with foreigners as one dimension of the "restoring communities" theme. Eighteen

recommendations were drawn up under four headings, including policies toward coexistence with foreigners.

The Committee dispatched members to Shizuoka and Aichi Prefectures on February 14–15, 2008, to conduct fact-finding surveys on the aged society with a declining birthrate, and on a cooperative way of life.

II. Outline of the Committee's Research

“Restoring and Strengthening Communities”

1. Hearings with Government Representatives and Main Q&A

On November 7, 2007, the Committee was briefed on the subject of restoring communities by Senior Vice Minister of the Cabinet Office Yoshio Nakagawa, Senior Vice Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications Takayoshi Taniguchi, Senior Vice Minister of Justice Katsuyuki Kawai, Senior Vice Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Yasuko Ikenobo, and Senior Vice Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare Kouichi Kishi. Q&A sessions took place on November 7 and 21.

In addition, drawing on prior interviews with voluntary testifiers, on April 23, 2008, questions were directed to Senior Vice Minister of Justice Kawai, Senior Vice Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Ikenobo and Senior Vice Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare Kyoko Nishikawa on specific issues in restoring communities, namely the education of foreign children and others and social security for foreign workers.

The following is a summary of these sessions.

(November 7, 2007)

Cabinet Office

To restore communities, since fiscal 2007 the Cabinet Office has been pursuing a nationwide movement to revive family and community bonds. We have designated the third Sunday of every November Family Day and the two weeks around it Family Weeks, and will promote the movement through public awareness campaigns and other means. We are also actively pursuing food education as a community-driven operation. To restore local communities, since fiscal 2005 we have been working to foster community leaders and enhance network formation by providing assistance for collaborative projects between civil society groups such as specified nonprofit corporations and a diverse range of community entities. Community- and town-building is an area where women could be more active, and this has

consequently been earmarked in the Second Basic Plan for Gender Equality as an area requiring new initiatives. The Cabinet Office will dispatch advisors and otherwise provide active support for projects which could serve as models for grassroots community-building led by women. To support young people, we will address the issue of coordination among the relevant local institutions through steps such as enhancing the function of local youth support stations as support bases. Measures supporting trends such as dual residence in metropolitan and rural areas and “UJI turns” (elected shifts in residence primarily from urban to rural areas) should also help to resolve the distortion in population distribution of too few people in rural areas and too many in urban areas, invigorating local economies.

Turning to measures combating inversion of the age pyramid, to redress the falling birth rate, we will develop the Key Strategy for “Japan Supporting Children and Families” by the end of 2007. The top-priority issue of reforming work modes in particular will be addressed by formulating a charter and an action policy before the end of 2007 toward achieving a better work-life balance. In response to the graying of society, the General Principles concerning Measures for the Aged Society has been developed based on the Basic Law on Measures for the Aging Society, enabling a comprehensive approach to advancing work in the various areas. However, as five years have now passed since these measures were formulated, we will be pursuing the necessary revisions.

Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

Looking first at restoring communities, as society ages and the birthrate declines, trends such as depopulation in rural areas are weakening community coexistence and community bonds. To address this issue, the Community Study Group was established in February 2007, with an interim report produced in June that year. The report advocates synergistic activities through vehicles for partnership and cooperation among neighborhood associations, social welfare councils, and various other entities, the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to stimulate local socioeconomies, and education exchange between cities and rural areas. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications is working together with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to push forward strongly with

a rural exchange program for city children, and we will spend the next five years developing the necessary framework and social momentum to provide 1.2 million students from elementary schools around Japan (in other words, the average total number of students in each grade) every year with a week-long experience in village living.

Turning to coexistence with foreigners, recent years have seen a rapid rise in the number of foreigners in Japan, with a growing trend toward long-term residence. This in turn poses some urgent challenges for local governments in dealing with issues such as language, medical care, and education. Local governments are currently working hard to promote the coexistence of diverse cultures in local communities, whereby people of different nationalities and ethnicities acknowledge their cultural differences and build equal relations, living together as members of the local community. In March 2006, we drew on a report by the Study Group on Promoting Multicultural Coexistence to formulate the Plan for Multicultural Coexistence Promotion in Local Communities. Local governments are using this plan as a reference in creating their own guidelines and plans. As concrete examples, Aichi, Gunma, and four other prefectures, as well as one city, currently have systems in place to provide information on their websites in multiple languages, while Hamamatsu City has established study support classes for foreigners.

Ministry of Justice

A growing number of foreigners are entering Japan, reaching a record high of around 8.11 million in 2006. Of these, some 6.41 million will stay short-term, while around 81,000 have residence status allowing them to work in Japan, and around 55,000 have residence status allowing unrestricted work, such as granted to foreigners of Japanese descent. As at January 1, 2007, there were around 171,000 illegal overstayers. In 2006, around 56,000 persons were deported for violation of the Immigration Control Act, around 46,000 of whom were engaged in illegal work. The Action Plan to Create a Crime-Resistant Society that was formulated in December 2003 aims to halve the number of illegal residents by 2008. Faced with a declining birth rate and a graying population, it is certainly important to discuss the intake of foreigners into Japan, but given the substantial number of illegal residents currently at large, the intake of so-called manual laborers should be approached with

caution.

As at the end of 2006, the number of foreigners registered in Japan had reached a record high of around 2.08 million. The status of foreigners' entry and stay is monitored through immigration and residence examinations pursuant to the Immigration Control Act, as well as the alien registration system operated under the Alien Registration Act. However, a number of weaknesses have been indicated in the current system, including administrative inefficiency, the burden placed on foreigners, and the difficulty of gauging the living and working circumstances of foreigners in Japan. A working group on the management of foreigners' residence in Japan was established in 2005 under the auspices of the Ministerial Meeting Concerning Measures Against Crime, and the results of this group's considerations, which were announced in July 2007, laid out directions such as placing all residence information under the control of the Minister of Justice. In addition, the Three-Year Program for the Promotion of Regulatory Reform that was adopted by Cabinet decision in June 2007 calls for draft legislation to be submitted ahead of the 2009 ordinary Diet session. In response to these developments, the Ministry of Justice too has established a Special Committee on Residence Management under the auspices of the Informal Policy Conference on Immigration Control. The committee is currently pursuing considerations toward the creation of a report by the end of fiscal 2007.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

A critical issue in restoring communities is to strengthen the bonds of families and households, which constitute the bedrock of community. At school, students are taught about the importance of family and of building households, and this instruction will be further enhanced through means including revisions to the courses of study. To support home education, we are operating the Project for Improving the Daily Lifestyles of Children.

It has been observed that local educational capacity is declining as a result of the attenuation of human relations accompanying the falling birth rate and urbanization. Local ties simply must be strengthened, and in addition to our project encouraging people to utilize their knowledge and experience and strengthening community bonds, we are also working together with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare on the Program to

Promote After-School Classes for Children to support the creation of safe places where children can feel secure.

To promote coexistence with foreigners, we operate a support program for local volunteer groups and other bodies engaged in Japanese language education, and deploy teachers to instruct foreign students in the Japanese language. We have also created the *Guidebook for Starting School* in seven languages, which provides all the necessary information on issues such as Japan's education system and enrolment procedures. In addition, the Ministry is assisting school study for foreign students by, for example, promoting a Japanese as a second language (JSL) curriculum in school education that provides support from the initial stages of Japanese language instruction through to the point of curricular study, as well as utilizing bilingual counselors. Our fiscal 2008 budget request also adds in new spending for a program to dispatch personnel with foreign language proficiency to elementary schools and junior and senior high schools.

Our measures to deal with the falling birth rate include reducing the burden on guardians in terms of daycare costs, etc., expanding the scholarship system, and pursuing the After-School Plan for Children and other efforts to secure children's safety in and beyond school grounds.

In response to the aging of society, we are working from the General Principles concerning Measures for the Aged Society in developing prefectural-level lifelong learning promotion systems, providing opportunities for university education, and considering the establishment of an "education supporter" system.

Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

As a result of ongoing inversion of the age pyramid, around 6.8 million elderly people are expected to be living alone by 2025. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has launched a project to eliminate cases of elderly people passing away alone, with their deaths sometimes not discovered for some time. To prevent these "deaths in isolation," the Ministry is providing support for the supply of emergency notification devices and conducting model projects for the creation of networks preventing "isolation deaths." In addition, with the growing trend toward nuclear families leading people to feel burdened by and concerned at the challenges of child-raising, we have introduced a system of visits to all families with babies by the time the babies

are four months old, and we are also developing local child-raising support bases, etc. Another initiative is the development of networks centered on child guidance centers to prevent child abuse at the local level. To support single mothers, the Law for the Welfare of Mothers with Dependents and Widows and other related regulations were revised in 2002, with the focus of support shifting from child support allowances to comprehensive support toward finding work and becoming independent.

To develop a comprehensive approach to the falling birth rate, the Key Strategy Council for “Japan Supporting Children and Families” is looking at issues such as local-level child-raising support systems, and will complete a strategy outline by the end of 2007. In addition, a range of local welfare measures have been developed, including formulation of local welfare plans by local governments and counseling and support provided by welfare volunteers, while a study group is currently examining these local welfare measures. Through such efforts, we aim to support the creation of a new cycle among the community, workplaces, and families whereby a work-life balance is achieved, families can participate in communities, and communities support families.

Turning to coexistence with foreigners, we are actively promoting the employment of foreigners in specialist and technical areas. We need to be very careful about absorbing manual laborers and expanding the scope of foreign labor intake, as this could have such negative effects as restricting job opportunities for women and young people, etc., and creating a two-tiered labor market. In the case of South American workers of Japanese descent, who are clustered in the Kanto and Chubu regions, we are providing job guidance to help their children find work, as well as individual support for workers in unstable jobs. Overall, because foreigners are unfamiliar with Japanese lifestyle customs and work practices, we have formulated guidelines toward better management of foreigners’ employment, and offer advice and guidance to employers. To ensure application of the social security system regardless of nationality, we are working to provide guidance on appropriate application in the Social Insurance Agency, towns and villages, and public employment security offices.

These explanations from government representatives were followed by question and answer sessions, the main points of which were as follows.

(a) Information is currently managed on two separate levels—by the central government under the Immigration Control Act and at the local level pursuant to the Alien Registration Act. This is creating a number of problems, including the issuance of alien registration cards to illegal residents. A new residence management system is under consideration, whereby the Immigration Bureau will issue residence cards administered solely by the Minister of Justice.

(b) One major cause of the birth rate decline is that women are marrying late. Reasons for this may include diversifying values, women's career advancement, and the fact that women aren't able to choose to keep their maiden names after marriage.

(c) The industrial training and technical internship program is in some cases being inappropriately exploited to use trainees as labor, with some firms failing to pay wages to their interns. The Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO) needs to ensure that all accepting institutions conduct voluntary checks and to go around accepting groups itself to provide guidance.

(d) As support for study at public schools by foreign children of school age, Japanese language teachers are being deployed and the *Guidebook for Starting School* distributed. Teacher numbers will be boosted by 20,000 over the next three years through, for example, the employment of part-time teachers.

(e) The foster parent system needs to be enhanced by working with social welfare facilities to make such improvements as increasing the number of foster parents taking in children over the *Bon* summer holiday and New Year periods. To that end, the number of households prepared to take in children needs to be boosted by, for example, increasing allowances and educating the public on the importance of the system.

(f) Local youth support stations are being set up to bolster youth work independence efforts, with comprehensive counseling support, psychological counseling, and work experience and other programs also in place. In fiscal 2006 there were 25 support stations. The number is being increased to 50 in fiscal 2007, with the aim of creating at least one station in every prefecture.

(g) To support single-mother households, a shift has been made from a child support allowance focus to comprehensive support in finding jobs and becoming independent. However, given the struggles of single-mother

households, we need to investigate the effectiveness of job-finding support.

(h) To support independence for single-mother households, a shift is needed from support focused on child support allowances to comprehensive support in finding jobs and becoming independent so that single mothers can receive vocational training and earn higher wages.

(i) Because many foreigners end up paying money for a pension that they will never receive, we have concluded social security agreements with Germany and seven other countries since 1999 as a means of resolving this issue, as well as the issue of duplicate insurance payments. There is also a system of lump-sum withdrawal payments for foreigners, which is applied in exceptional cases.

(November 21, 2007)

(a) In terms of restoring local communities, there are an increasing number of cases where local governments and non-profit organizations (NPOs) collaborate on projects, but a mechanism is needed to clarify the necessary information at the planning stage, which would also benefit sound NPO development.

(b) The Legislative Council of the Ministry of Justice put together a report in 1996 on a system enabling women to elect to retain their maiden names after marriage, but opinion surveys suggest that public opinion remains deeply split on the issue.

(c) Greater participation by women will be vital in restoring communities, but men, elderly people, young people, and children also need to be involved in community development.

(d) A key issue in coexistence with foreigners is education for foreign children. One problem, however, is that even where foreign schools are officially designated as miscellaneous schools (*kakushu gakko*), some transport operators still require a certain waiting period following designation before they will issue student commuting passes, and something needs to be done about such problems.

(e) A key issue in promoting coexistence with foreigners will be to improve education measures, and fact-finding surveys on the education environment for foreign children, including those children who do not attend school, need to be conducted in more regions than at present.

(f) While the issue of Japanese language education for foreign

children is being addressed by distributing the *Guidebook for Starting School* and by deploying Japanese language teachers to support foreign children enrolled at public schools, further consideration should be given to such aspects as educational materials, and use should be made of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test.

(g) One program to support job-finding for single mothers is the advanced vocational training promotion scheme, but further support is necessary, including improving payment conditions for advanced vocational training promotion expenses and promoting the transition to full-time employment, bearing in mind the need for livelihood security.

(h) A key issue in multicultural coexistence is for foreigners to learn Japanese, but a system also needs to be established for people who don't speak Japanese to cover emergency situations such as medical emergencies and disasters.

(April 23, 2008)

(a) One government meeting on foreign labor issues is the Liaison Council of the Ministries and Agencies on the Issue of Foreign Workers established in 1998, but consideration should also be given to establishing a ministerial meeting.

(b) The new residence management system that is currently being prepared is designed to meet two demands—accurate residence management through the unified management of residence information, and greater convenience for those foreigners residing legitimately in Japan. It also aims to realize an integrated society by such means as promoting support measures for foreigners as community members and working to ensure that all foreign children of school age attend school.

(c) Key issues in relation to foreign children as community members will be ensuring school attendance under the new residence management system, improving Japanese language education, and providing guidance on childcare that caters for different nationalities and cultures.

(d) Given that the intake of foreign labor has caused major social problems in Europe, including widening domestic social disparities, we need to give careful consideration to this issue from a long-term perspective, bearing in mind the impact on medical care, social security, education, and local communities, as well as the issue of civil order.

(e) Steps being taken to safeguard the right of foreign children to an education include free admission into public schools providing compulsory education, deployment of Japanese language teachers, provision of information on the education system and enrolment procedures in multiple languages, deployment to schools of local human resources who understand foreign languages as assistants in programs promoting the intake of foreign students and Japanese students who have grown up overseas, and utilization of the experience of foreign students of living abroad in school learning activities.

(f) Instructing foreign students requires teachers who can both teach Japanese language and help students to adapt, and training is being provided to teachers in practical Japanese language instruction methods. As of fiscal 2007, a training program has been launched toward broad deployment of the Japanese as a second language (JSL) curriculum.

(g) It has been noted that many foreign children are in the serious situation of not attending school because of their parents' unstable work environment. A nation-wide fact-finding survey needs to be conducted in this regard, bearing in mind the respective structures and according burden placed on local governments.

(h) The AmerAsian School in Okinawa was established in response to the problem of Amerasian children (children with Japanese mothers and fathers from the United States forces stationed in Okinawa) not attending school. Japanese language teachers should continue to be dispatched to the school, teachers' manuals for the various subjects should be made free, and the lack of classrooms should be redressed.

(i) In relation to foreigners not enrolling in the health insurance scheme, companies employing foreigners are being directed to make proper notifications. Even where foreigners aren't covered under other public medical insurance systems, if they are in Japan on a legitimate visa, have officially registered, and have received permission for a stay of one year or more, they qualify for national health insurance.

(j) Medical institutions need to be directed to provide emergency medical care to foreigners. Funds have been extended to emergency medical care centers since fiscal 1996 to cover unpaid fees, but these are not completely covering outstanding fees.

(k) According to statistics released in 2008, there were 1,100 cleared

cases involving foreign juveniles in Japan, of which more than half involved Brazilians. There are currently 14 juvenile training schools around Japan that have programs in place for foreign juveniles, and the 62 juveniles detained there are receiving corrective training, Japanese language instruction, and other instruction.

2. Hearings with Voluntary Testifiers and Main Q&A

The Committee heard the views of voluntary testifiers on restoring communities, addressing coexistence with foreigners in the community on February 20, 2008, coexistence with foreigners in the labor market on February 27, the education of foreign children and others on April 9, and social security for foreign workers on April 16. These sessions were followed by questions from the Committee. Main points were as follows.

(February 20, 2008)

Shigehiro Ikegami, Associate Professor, Department of International Culture, Faculty of Cultural Policy and Management, Shizuoka University of Art and Culture

According to a 2007 survey on foreign workers in Shizuoka Prefecture, Brazilians have the following characteristics: (1) they come to Japan seeking temporary work, but increasingly tend to stay; (2) many are engaged in indirect employment, with no change in type of work or job even after they have been in Japan for some time; (3) many are not enrolled in social security, whether social insurance or pensions; (4) many of them rate their conversational Japanese ability highly, but are strongly aware of the need to study Japanese.

The overwhelming majority of foreigners work under the inferior conditions pertaining to contract labor and disguised contract labor, and issues such as delays in seeking medical attention because they are not enrolled in health insurance are becoming problematic. Other challenges for the community include education for foreign children and cultural friction arising from differences in living customs, etc.

Government efforts to respond to foreigners have made the swiftest progress at the local level. In cases where the ratio of foreigners has risen beyond a certain level, boards of education and public schools have been

deploying extra teachers and instructors familiar with other languages and cultures, school documents are being translated, and other measures are being implemented. Efforts by volunteers, NPOs, international exchange associations, and others too have become increasingly prominent in recent years. The committee for localities with a concentrated non-Japanese population, which comprises cities with large numbers of South Americans of Japanese descent and other foreign residents, has put forward various declarations and recommendations. Meanwhile, six prefectures, including Aichi and Mie, and also one city, have presented joint requests to government ministries.

Realizing multicultural coexistence in local communities requires collaboration among a number of entities, including local governments and neighborhood associations, with corporate efforts playing a particularly vital role. Major local firms need to exercise their corporate social responsibility. Nippon Keidanren has adopted a proactive stance on living support for foreigners, and the Toyota and Hamamatsu Chambers of Commerce and Industry too have created guidelines for firms employing foreigners. However, these have not led to national-level action and issues need to be identified and shared at the national administration level.

Multicultural coexistence requires a vision of local community that embraces foreigners. It means securing the rights and obligations of foreigners and realizing their social participation. Japanese society too stands to gain vitality from welcoming in foreigners, with local industries, communities, and culture advancing as a result. What we need now are comprehensive policies to this end.

Hiroko Nakayama, Mayor, Shinjuku City

As at January 1, 2008, 31,856 foreigners were living in Shinjuku City. Encompassing some 113 nationalities, these foreigners account for 10.3 percent of the city's population. In the Okubo area where many of Shinjuku's foreigners are clustered, communication problems between Japanese and foreigners resulting from differences in language and living customs can sometimes cause misunderstandings and trouble as well as incidents involving prejudice and discrimination. Imagination is required of both parties in empathizing with one another.

When I was appointed Shinjuku City Mayor in 2002, I felt that it was

vital to clarify a direction for measures related to foreigners, and I set out to make Shinjuku a place of multicultural coexistence whereby our large foreign population could be presented as a positive aspect of Shinjuku. To that end, I have established the Shinjuku Multicultural Plaza, instituted local Japanese language classes organized by Shinjuku City, offered Japanese instruction for children to help them adapt to the language, provided multilingual information in our living guides and pamphlets and on our website, and promoted the creation of network liaison meetings to build personal relations among action groups and local residents, foreigners included.

Due to the declining birthrate and the aging population, Japan is expected to come to rely on foreigners for labor. Children and older people will come to Japan as part of workers' families, and foreigners will be living all over Japan, with various issues arising as a result. However, because the current alien registration system does not obligate foreigners to notify their local authorities before they move or return home, the authorities do not have precise information on who is living where, creating problems in terms of the provision of administrative services and tax payments. Other issues include the lack of human resources and support programs for supporting foreigners' daily lives, support for children who don't understand Japanese, securing accommodation for foreigners, and medical care and social security issues.

To address these issues, at the national level the government needs to develop mechanisms and programs for the intensive study of Japanese language and Japanese living customs by foreigners as soon as possible after arriving in Japan, while also developing a comprehensive framework for living support, including social security and children's education.

Yoshico Mori, President, Serviço de Assistência aos Brasileiros no Japão (SABJA)

I came to Japan in 1986 as a second-generation Brazilian of Japanese descent and a missionary for the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. I have been working for SABJA, initially providing support for women married to Japanese men, and subsequently support for foreigners in general through phone counseling.

There are around 320,000 Brazilians in Japan, making them the third largest group of foreigners. Some 78,000 of these have permanent resident status. Young people educated at Japanese schools think and act the

same as Japanese, and they have no plans for returning to Brazil. Brazilians in Japan often contract with temporary staff dispatch firms and are consequently affected by the production plans of the factories where they work. These unstable work conditions cause them to move around Japan a lot, which in turn impacts negatively on their children's education and their relationships with their neighbors. In terms of social security, only 60 percent are enrolled in health insurance, while pensions are likely to cause serious problems for both Japan and Brazil in the near future.

There are some Brazilian children who could not adapt to the Japanese education system, and they are having problems out in society. In addition, 11,500 children are currently enrolled in Brazilian schools in Japan where they have trouble making Japanese friends, and this could lead to communication problems for them as adults. Believing that Brazilians will only be able to respect other cultures and make friends with Japanese and people of other nationalities when they have their own identity and culture, we organized a festival for Brazilian youths of Japanese descent in 2002, which was also recognized as prompting a move among Japanese too to try to understand Brazilians.

Efforts by local governments and companies are also important. While many foreigners live in Kanagawa Prefecture, there are very few problems. One major reason for this is the preventive measures taken by local governments, such as the appointment of multilingual staff to help foreign children adapt to Japanese schools. "Rear support" from private-sector firms, including, for example, funding, is contributing not only to the Brazilian community but also to Japan's growth and dynamism.

I would like to see the government introduce deregulation to enable "miscellaneous school" designation for Brazilian schools; on the social security front, totalization of pension payment years and cooperation on retroactive insurance payment exemption measures; cooperation on the issue of having Brazilians in Japan meet their child support payment obligations for children who remain back in Brazil; and the early signature of a bilateral agreement for mutual support on criminal cases.

A subsequent question and answer session drew on these views. Main points were as follows.

- (a) Problems relating to areas where foreigners of Japanese descent

are clustered are closely correlated to manufacturing industry locations, and are therefore of concern only to a limited number of areas. However, because circumstances such as marriage are taking foreigners all over Japan, promoting multicultural coexistence will eventually become a nationwide issue.

(b) Because they need to reduce costs, companies are employing foreign workers on different conditions from Japanese workers in terms of employment duration and wage rises, etc., which is problematic in light of the principle of equal pay and equal conditions for equal work.

(c) According to the Shizuoka Prefecture survey, reasons for employing foreigners are the lack of regular Japanese workers applying for jobs and that foreigners are prepared to be flexible about working nights and holidays, etc. It also emerged that wage rises, retirement pay, and other systems are seldom applied, and that foreign workers are being used as an adjustment mechanism in the face of changing labor demand.

(d) The rate of enrollment in employment and health insurance among foreigners is low even compared to Japanese workers in non-regular employment, while competition among companies has meant that the relevant laws and regulations are not necessarily being observed. The central government needs to deal with these issues by creating mechanisms for the steady implementation of existing systems and by developing a management structure.

(e) Education lays the foundations for foreign children in conducting their daily lives, and the central government needs to improve its systems to enable local governments to develop and implement various human resource and support programs according to local circumstances. Companies also need to invest in human resources and society from the long-term perspective of securing a future labor force.

(f) There are some concerns that the scholastic ability of Japanese students will decline due to the intake of foreign students into public schools. These concerns can be met by increasing the number of teachers deployed and otherwise building a sufficient system based on the understanding that policies targeting foreigners are developed with a view to Japanese society as a whole, foreigners included.

(g) Looking at the issue of Brazilian children not attending school, the extent of the situation is difficult to grasp because foreigners are not legally

obligated to register changes of address, and their current addresses can accordingly differ from those given under the alien registration system. Children are not attending school for a combination of reasons, including communication problems between parents and children in the home and domestic violence.

(h) Having Japanese and foreign children learn together at public schools offers the merit of opening the way for mutual communication. To this end, innovations that are being introduced in Aichi Prefecture and elsewhere, such as the use of multicultural social workers to bring together people from different cultural backgrounds, and systems including preparatory programs to help foreign students adapt when they first enter school in Japan, need to be expanded into national-level mechanisms.

(i) A wide range of support measures is needed for Brazilians living in Japan to address, for example, protection for migrant workers and other labor issues, as well as domestic violence. However, there are many cases where the counseling services provided by local governments are not responding effectively to these issues. Other problems include the relatively few groups supporting Brazilians and the lack of funding.

(j) Local governments need to develop the necessary service mechanisms to cope with foreign residents receiving medical care or nursing care services, including the provision of interpreters trained in specialist terminology, etc. A framework also needs to be created by local governments and companies to secure stable positions for those foreign workers wanting to work at hospitals and schools. A division should be established to handle the issue of workers' accident compensation for foreigners.

(February 27, 2008)

Yasushi Iguchi, Professor, School of Economics, Kwansei Gakuin University

The rapid changes occurring in Japan's labor market this century are also impacting on foreign labor issues. Urgent challenges in regard to foreign labor include the growing tendency for foreigners of Japanese descent to take up long-term residence in Japan to the point where, those with permanent resident status included, foreigners of Japanese descent number more than 300,000 and continue to increase; the many foreign workers engaged in contract labor, taking them outside the scope of social security; the large number of foreign children who fail to enter high school and end up as

non-regular employees; and the greatly increasing number of foreign trainees coming to Japan to acquire skills.

The revised Employment Measures Law, which was enacted during the 2007 ordinary Diet session, has opened the way for confirming the status of foreign employment and the supply of information from public employment security offices to the Immigration Bureau. Because employment status is critical information in affirming the rights and obligations of foreigners, it is vital that communities and local governments pay close attention to employment issues.

Dramatic changes in the labor market in recent years—for example, growing employment in the manufacturing industry, a shortage of engineers in particular, and the outflow of staff from medical care, nursing, and welfare into other industries—are boosting demand for foreign workers. By my estimate, foreign workers excluding those with special permanent resident status numbered some 930,000 as at the end of 2006. Given that 170,000 entered the country with work permission, most of these workers have evidently entered Japan and are working here in a form that differs from the government's cautious position on absorbing manual laborers. Where Brazilians of Japanese descent tend to congregate in areas such as the Tokai region where there are automobile-related and other industrial clusters, human resources with advanced skills and expertise tend to cluster in the big cities.

Some regions with large populations of Brazilians of Japanese descent have high ratios of women and the elderly participating in the labor force, but these groups aren't competing for the same jobs. Factors behind the return home of Japan's manufacturing industries include falling industrial land prices, the plunging exchange rates in recent years, and also the availability of foreign labor and particularly Brazilians of Japanese descent.

Contract labor inevitably entails elasticity in the volume and duration of work, and is tantamount to a new labor-leasing system. Since the government lifted its ban on dispatching workers to production sites, there has been a shift from contracting to dispatching. However, because dispatch workers have to be directly employed after three years, in some cases we have also seen a return to contracting. The so-called "new industrial cities" where industrial clusters are emerging are attracting a labor force despite Japan's declining population, with Brazilian workers of Japanese descent also

moving to these regions. While multicultural coexistence programs are underway in these regions, residence management reform must include respecting rights and fulfilling obligations. As foreign trainees are often embroiled in cases of improper conduct, the relevant ministries have agreed to apply in principle labor-related laws and regulations in the legislative amendments scheduled for 2009.

The move to create a resident register system for foreigners is certainly a key reform in terms of securing the rights and obligations of foreigners. In addition, however, we need to ensure that foreigners living in our country are supplied with at least the minimum necessary information, and also secure opportunities for them to acquire Japanese language proficiency. Compulsory education also needs to apply to all foreign children and the necessary conditions must be set in place to that end.

Once improvements have been made to the residence management system and foreign labor issues, the next stage of reform should address the expanded intake of foreign workers, which should be developed in a cross-generational partnership together with the countries of East Asia.

Hiroshi Tachibana, Senior Managing Director, Nippon Keidanren (Japan Business Federation)

Due to Japan's falling birthrate and the graying of society, as well as intensifying global competition, the intake and proactive utilization of foreigners have become crucial in maintaining the dynamism of Japan's economy and industry. In particular, we need to draw on foreigners' diverse values, experiences, and knowhow to boost the added-value creation capacity of each Japanese citizen, and this will require actively absorbing a diverse range of foreign human resources with a particular emphasis on those with expertise and high-level knowhow in specialist and technical areas.

Chronic shortages of skilled labor are expected in areas such as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries; construction; and machinery assembly, and while it will certainly be important to use young people, women, and the elderly to alleviate the situation, labor shortfalls will ultimately only be resolved by bringing in foreign human resources. We need to deepen national discussion that acknowledges regional and industrial realities in determining whether or not we can maintain the government's basic policy of actively taking in foreign labor in specialist and technical areas while

approaching the intake of manual labor with caution. Because revisiting this basic policy will inevitably take time, and during that time labor shortages will become critical, in the interim we need to undertake the necessary improvements to facilitate the intake of foreign human resources with expertise and high-level knowledge. Simultaneously, we should be preparing for a “soft landing” by engaging in the phased expansion of our foreign human resource intake starting with those areas where labor shortages are particularly marked. These intakes should be premised on certain requirements in terms of skills, qualifications, and Japanese language proficiency.

In 2004, Nippon Keidanren announced a set of comprehensive recommendations on accepting non-Japanese workers, suggesting that expansion of that intake be based on three principles. First, that intake must be well organized to ensure sufficient control over the quality and quantity of those accepted. This will require objective judgment based on rational standards and clear requirements in terms of types of occupations, skills, intake numbers, and the duration of stay. Second, the human rights of non-Japanese workers must be respected and discrimination banned, with conformance with labor laws and regulations an inherent corporate obligation. At the local level, employers’ associations are leading the way in creating charters and working toward legal compliance. Thirdly, acceptance of non-Japanese workers must benefit both Japan and workers’ countries of origin. Under these principles, we propose expediting the intake of human resources in specialist and technical areas, as well as boosting the quality of foreign students studying in Japan and helping them to find jobs in Japan. To improve the system for accepting foreign workers, we have made recommendations including establishing an office for accepting non-Japanese workers within the Cabinet Office to ensure the coordinated and consistent promotion of measures by the central and local governments; improving living conditions for foreigners who have entered Japan; addressing issues in relation to entry and work by foreigners of Japanese descent; and taking measures in regard to illegal residents and public security.

In September 2007, Nippon Keidanren announced its recommendations on revisiting the industrial training and technical internship program. This program is intended to provide young and middle-aged people from developing countries with the opportunity to

acquire skills while earning money, and is also an important means for firms to acquire human resources. However, given issues such as misconduct on the part of accepting institutions and absconding trainees and interns, the system is obviously urgently in need of improvement and stable operation. Flexibility should be introduced into the periods of time required to be spent on Japanese language acquisition and other classes, industrial training, and technical internship, so that once a trainee is recognized as having acquired a certain level of skill, he or she can move on sooner to technical internship, a step which would also serve as an incentive for trainees. Talented interns should be allowed to stay on for an extra two years of internship, and a system should also be developed for recognizing outstanding accepting firms and allowing these firms to keep their trainees for a further internship period. This would also help to prevent interns absconding near the completion of their internship period and encourage proper operation of the system.

Takeshi Kawata, Executive Vice President, Aisin Seiki Co., Ltd.

Since 2000, we have been expanding our payroll with a particular focus on fixed-term workers in response to the swift growth in sales that has accompanied accelerated globalization. As at 2007, we have 5,260 fixed-term employees, representing 30 percent of our payroll, and around 1,800 of these are foreigners of Japanese descent, most of whom are engaged in skilled work.

The reason that we are employing foreigners is the need for a system of personnel management that uses a balance between full-time staff and fixed-term contract staff to maintain stable employment in the face of major production fluctuations. We also need to use fixed-term contract staff as a means of shortening the working hours of individual full-time employees. We have been employing foreigners of Japanese descent for over 20 years, beginning in the mid-1980s when a rapid rise in car production created a labor shortage, which was redressed by contracting these foreign workers. In the early 1990s, the collapse of the bubble economy led to a temporary cessation in their contracting. We later resumed employment of foreign workers in the form of direct employment on a fixed-term contract basis, introducing full-time employment in fiscal 2006. We chose direct employment because of the need for full-time staff and fixed-term contract staff to work together in the manufacturing process for reasons such as continuation of

specific skills in the workplace.

Around three-quarters of our foreign workers of Japanese descent are in their 30s or younger, with an average age of 33.2 years. Short stays are common, with around half of the group remaining for less than a year, but a solid 15 percent have also been with us for three years or more, and in recent years there has been a gradual trend toward more years of work. Foreigners of Japanese descent are deployed in the workplace on the assumption that they will pick up skills quickly, and most are engaged in materials fabrication and assembly. Because many of them are young, many are also unmarried, but the longer they work, the greater the percentage with families, creating the need for housing and other living assistance.

To foster a sense of solidarity, production instructions are written in both Japanese and Portuguese in those workplaces with a lot of Brazilian workers. Japanese seasonal workers, contract employees, and Brazilian workers all have to take the same examination to become a full-time employee, with 17 Brazilians becoming full-time to date despite the language handicap. We also put out a quarterly publication in Portuguese and provide Brazilian food in staff cafeterias.

In terms of what we would like the government to do, the first issue is deregulation of foreign labor. An ongoing chronic labor shortage has made it difficult to employ even Japanese fixed-term contract workers. The government should look at creating the labor conditions to enable employment of fourth-generation ethnic Japanese and other foreigners who are already living in Japan and have reached working age. Secondly, pensions, education, and other lifestyle infrastructure systems need to be improved so that foreign workers can continue working with a sense of security. In the case of pensions, foreigners of Japanese descent who work in Japan are required to make pension payments, but if they return home, they are only entitled to receive a lump-sum withdrawal payment for three years' worth of contribution payments, which is prompting an increasing number of workers to go home after three years. In addition, the longer foreigners work in Japan, the more likely they are to be confronted with the issue of their children's education. Sometimes children refuse to go to school because of communication problems, leading on to criminal behavior, and this is an issue that needs to be urgently addressed. Then, as those children who want to go back to work in Brazil in the future also need to have completed the

Brazilian education curriculum, schools should be established with authorization from the Brazilian Ministry of Education.

A subsequent question and answer session drew on these views. Main points were as follows.

(a) Given that 40,000 foreigners per annum are being granted permanent residence, Japan would seem to be in the process of becoming a nation of immigrants, and it is time to consider how to secure the rights of those with permanent resident status.

(b) The issue of immigrants should be dealt with once we have resolved immediately pressing issues in regard to the intake of foreigners of Japanese descent and foreign industrial trainees and technical interns. We first need to build a system like that of social security numbers in the U.S. to manage the information that provides the foundations for social life, then create a society that does not discriminate between Japanese and foreigners.

(c) While it would be difficult to grant powers to local governments under the current immigration administration mechanisms, we could build a new Japanese-style residence management system that enables the status of foreigners' rights and obligations to be confirmed at a single point in a form as close as possible to that of the basic resident register system for Japanese citizens.

(d) National policy for the intake of foreigners is contradictory in that we refuse to accept manual workers even as foreigners of Japanese descent are engaged as manual labor, placing a heavy burden on local governments in terms of community living, children's education, and other factors. To lighten this burden, we need to look at the amount of local allocation tax and provide support for international exchange associations and NPOs, etc., in the various regions through a fund.

(e) The intake of foreign workers has to be premised on cracking down on infringements of laws and regulations in relation to labor conditions. A hotline should also be set up so that workers can assert their rights in their own language when they receive unfair treatment. In cases that are close to human trafficking from the country of origin, the government and JITCO need to call on that country to redress the situation.

(f) A shift from contracting to worker dispatches in factories would be a positive move, but one option for keeping factories in Japan would be to

create a new mechanism other than contracting and worker dispatches that is premised on the application of labor laws and regulations and enrollment in social insurance.

(g) In some cases the industrial training and technical internship program is mistaken for a simple worker dispatch program featuring foreigners, and it needs to be understood that the program requires companies to provide accommodation and pay training expenses, among other special conditions applying that differ from ordinary employment.

(h) The industrial training and technical internship program is premised upon conformance with laws and regulations, and in 2004, Nippon Keidanren proposed extending the period of suspension on accepting trainees to five years for those companies that have engaged in inappropriate acceptance. Even during training periods, if the actual situation is close to labor, Labour Standard Inspection Offices should provide guidance, and companies that do not obey laws and regulations could be excluded from public procurement tenders and penalties strengthened.

(i) The education of children of foreigners of Japanese descent is a serious issue, and companies need to make a contribution. Nippon Keidanren has not established a fund, but those companies that belong to the 1% Club, which requires 1 percent of company profits to be used for social contributions, could opt to channel that money into the education of the children of foreigners of Japanese descent. Education is also the responsibility of the parent, and when parents renew their visas, it should be checked whether they are sending their children to school.

(j) Foreign nurses who have been educated in Japan and acquired qualifications here are currently only allowed to stay in Japan for a restricted period of time. Because foreign care workers currently do not fit into any visa category, a welfare category needs to be created so that those who graduate from Japanese schools and acquire qualifications here can work in Japan.

(k) The recently-decided intake of Filipino nurses, etc., is predicated on their graduation from universities at home and acquisition of qualifications, and a ceiling should be set on the number of workers allowed in to Japan so as to avoid “poaching” from the Philippines. Means should be considered whereby qualifications acquired in Japan are also recognized in other countries, increasing the human resource pool for East Asia as a whole.

(April 9, 2008)

Ikuo Kawakami, Professor, Graduate School of Japanese Applied Linguistics, Waseda University

It is said that we have entered an age of mass population movement, whereby large numbers of people move across borders for a range of reasons including labor, migration, study, and marriage. Adults move for a particular purpose, and their families, and particularly their children, move along with them, sometimes again and again.

According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, in fiscal 2006 there were more than 22,000 foreign students enrolled at public schools who required Japanese language instruction, but the real figure is probably much higher. These children have disparate linguistic backgrounds embracing more than 60 languages. Thanks to their parents settling down in Japan, a growing number of foreign children are also being born in Japan.

Because the teachers instructing foreign students generally don't have any experience in this regard, they are struggling to communicate with children and their parents. Interpreters who understand the children's native languages are essential, but interpreters alone will not solve everything. Children will understand a certain amount of Japanese just from living in Japan for a while, but being able to get by in everyday conversation does not mean that a child will be able to take part in class. Children who are not trained up to the necessary linguistic proficiency to take part in learning do not become better at Japanese even if they live here long, while because they are not educated in their native language, they remain weak in that language too. As a result, children end up not attending school or having problems moving up through school grades and thereafter. Basic interpersonal communication skills can be learned in one to two years, but academic linguistic proficiency is said to take five to seven years to acquire.

"Children crossing borders" move between countries, between their native language and Japanese, and between schools and curriculums. These children tend to be brought up in multilingual environments, learning Japanese as a second language (JSL). While various education measures have been instituted, including the establishment of target regions, budget measures, and the employment of bilingual instructors, many schools continue to rely on instruction by its teachers and local volunteers. Then,

despite the development of educational materials and curricula such as the JSL curriculum produced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, effects remain inadequate because of the lack of a system for absorbing these children and of specialist teachers to teach them. The Ministry has not provided clear standards on whether or not Japanese language instruction is necessary, with this judgment left up to schools. Schools, however, tend to decide that instruction is no longer necessary once a student can handle everyday conversation. It is important to be able to judge levels of language proficiency and provide instruction accordingly, which requires specialist teachers and benchmarks against which to make this judgment. The JSL bandscales, which were developed for this purpose, provides a mechanism for determining levels of Japanese language proficiency by rating the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing according to seven or eight levels for the three age groups of lower elementary school, middle and upper elementary school, and then junior and senior high school.

I would suggest the establishment and training of Japanese language teachers for children (JSL teachers), the revision of education laws and regulations, the establishment of JSL as a subject in teacher training programs, the positioning of JSL teacher training within the teacher training system, the employment of JSL teachers, training teachers already out in schools to become JSL teachers, the establishment of schools with JSL teachers specially allocated, the establishment of a long-term support system for each student, national language education policies that include foreign children, and policies for the development of education on multicultural coexistence.

Yutaka Yamada, Mayor, Kani City

Since the 1990 revisions to the Immigration Control Act, the number of foreigners registered in Kani City has continued to increase, reaching 7,161, or 6.6 percent of our population, as at March 1, 2008.

The steep rise in the number of foreign students in our schools has posed a number of challenges. For example, (a) because foreign students don't understand what is being taught, a single teacher in the classroom is not enough; (b) foreign students are not adapting to school life, with problems arising in relation to general guidance on school life; and (c) there can be

difficulties engaging with foreign students' parents who don't understand Japanese schools. Surveys on the education environment for foreign children undertaken in 2003 and 2004 also revealed that around 7 percent of children are not attending school.

To ensure that all children attend school, Kani City has launched a program to guarantee learning for foreign children. As a first step, we have established a system of "Bara Kyoshitsu Kani" classes, where children receive basic Japanese language instruction and are also taught how to act in Japanese schools. Once they complete this course, they start attending the school at which they are enrolled. Schools with numerous foreign students institute international classes, with the prefecture sending out additional staff. These classes take over where "Bara Kyoshitsu Kani" left off, providing instruction and advice on Japanese language as well as curriculum subjects. Once they have completed this course, students move into school life in the regular classes that they belong to.

Results of these programs have been as follows: (a) we have been able to deal with the doubling of foreign student numbers over three years and ensure that all students, Japanese students included, are engaged in stable education activities; (b) those students who have completed "Bara Kyoshitsu Kani" classes have adapted much more readily to school life, with almost no students leaving school midway; (c) the institution of this initial instruction has enabled schools and homeroom teachers to absorb foreign students effortlessly, with less trouble occurring because of language and culture differences; and (d) more foreign students are going on to the next level of education, with 10 of the 14 students who graduated from junior high in fiscal 2006 going on to senior high school and technical schools. Future challenges include building broad-ranging understanding of and support systems for the education of foreign students, helping those students who want to go on to higher education, and pursuing greater partnership among guardians, companies, and the community.

Mitsuhiro Kawase, Executive President, Hiro Gakuen Academy

Hiro Gakuen Academy originally opened in April 2000 as a private tutoring school, and was authorized as a school corporation by Gifu Prefecture in November 2006. In September 1999, I took on a Brazilian day-care center that was due to close, and this became the catalyst for opening Hiro Gakuen.

Parents came to me and said that the older siblings of the children at the day-care center were attending elementary and junior high schools in Ogaki City, but when they went back to Brazil they would face a number of problems, including language, their Brazilian academic records, and job-finding. I was asked to establish a school so that children like these would be able to fit back in easily in Brazil. We talked with the Ogaki City and Gifu Prefecture Boards of Education, but at the time there was neither the money nor the plans in place. In preparation for establishing the school, we looked at the Brazilian school in Toyota City in Aichi Prefecture, and visited the Brazilian Ministry of Education. The Ministry explained to us that students returning home from Japan were causing a social problem because they couldn't read, write, or speak Portuguese, and consequently had trouble finding jobs and faced other difficulties.

Hiro Gakuen Academy opened with 13 teachers and 120 students, but we were running a massive deficit every month and even had to consider closing the school. However, at a meeting with prospective students, one child complained of being repeatedly bullied at Japanese schools, and that made me determined to keep the school going. The school subsequently overcame its financial problems and was upgraded into a school corporation.

Currently, our classes are conducted in Portuguese in line with the Brazilian curriculum. We teach English and Japanese as foreign languages, and the success of these programs was evidenced by the three students who passed the top level of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test in 2006. We also interact with elementary, junior, and senior high schools in Ogaki City and elsewhere. Our educational policy is to provide our students with an education that will enable them to blend smoothly back into Brazilian society, but another of our goals is to ensure that students and their families form a good impression of Japan as providing them with a proper education in its capacity as their ethnic homeland.

Our first high school graduates emerged in 2003, one of whom succeeded in entering one of Brazil's highly competitive federal universities, attracting attention even back in Brazil. We currently have around 300 students, around 200 of whom commute from within Ogaki City. In terms of the challenges ahead, "hardware" aspects include creating a framework to absorb as many students as possible, while "software" aspects include strengthening our Japanese language classes.

Producing the largest possible number of bilingual individuals to act as a bridge between Japan and Brazil will benefit both countries.

A subsequent question and answer session drew on these views. Main points were as follows.

(a) While one approach in public schools could be to bring together foreign students from across the school for intensive instruction, schools with few foreign students often can't get extra teachers, and even where they can, these teachers don't always have the necessary skills and experience to teach foreign students.

(b) Given that many different foreigners are expected to come to Japan in the years ahead, learning together with JSL students will also be a valuable experience for Japanese students. It will be important to train specialist teachers, and also to build programs fostering verbal communication abilities into the various school subjects.

(c) While the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology operates JSL teacher training, it isn't only JSL teachers who instruct JSL children. Our teacher training system assumes that teachers will be teaching Japanese children, with JSL children left outside that framework. We need to revisit teacher training mechanisms themselves, and also ensure that training is kept closely matched to actual teaching conditions.

(d) To create more JSL teachers and specialists, we will need three course types. The first should generate specialists with a post-graduate major in JSL education and, accordingly, training in and knowledge of JSL education, who may be employed as JSL education experts. The second type should target teachers and teachers-in-training who wish to undertake post-graduate study to become JSL teachers. The third should be designed to provide students in teacher training programs with an understanding of JSL issues. Consideration should also be given to appointing personnel with native languages other than Japanese and the ability to work at Japanese schools as JSL teachers.

(e) Kani City's efforts in relation to foreign students are a good example of a local public body working together with schools and the community, but there are also foreign students under the care of local governments in areas that are not cities with large foreign populations, and

the fact is that these bodies do not have sufficient funds. The time has therefore come to consider a nationwide system.

(f) One reason that foreign children don't always attend school and that foreign schools have weak finances is that school attendance is not compulsory for foreign children as it is for Japanese children. Discussion needs to be deepened not only on the intake of foreign children into public schools, but also on their support and education once they have been enrolled.

(g) For foreign students living in Japan to acquire the necessary scholastic ability to grasp abstract concepts, they can either be taught in their native language at foreign schools or acquire the ability to think in Japanese in Japanese schools while maintaining that native language, with methods adapted to the needs of individual students.

(h) Problems with donations from companies to foreign schools include the difficulty that foreign schools have in garnering authorization as specified corporations for improving public interest.

(April 16, 2008)

Kazuaki Tezuka, Professor, Faculty of Law, Aoyama Gakuin University

Foreign residence is predicated on two types of labor: specialist occupations and so-called manual labor. Foreign workers of Japanese descent have primarily been absorbed in the latter capacity.

There are three ways of absorbing foreigners: the British-French style, whereby immigrants from former British and French colonies were granted citizenship; the German-Dutch style, absorbing foreigners from surrounding areas; and the Northern European style of proactive absorption of immigrants and refugees. In Germany and the Netherlands, foreigners were initially taken in on the assumption that they would go home after two or three years, but when stays became increasingly protracted, there was no choice but to grant permanent residence or citizenship. In Germany, it is compulsory to enroll in social insurance and to send children to school, equitable employment conditions are enforced, and ID cards are used to track addresses and various other types of registration. Parents who don't send their children to school lose their residence permits. The federal government earmarks the equivalent of around 30 billion yen in its budget to provide German language education for foreigners, presenting a major gap between Germany and Japan in this regard.

Japan has been formally absorbing foreigners of Japanese descent since the 1990 revisions to the Immigration Control Act. Japan's aging rate will hold at the highest in the world between 2005 and 2030, with persons 75 years and above comprising 19.3 percent of Japan's total population, or twice the 2000 level, by 2030. Among industrialized nations, those with the highest aging rates are Germany, Italy, Spain, and Japan, all of which have comparatively few women in the workplace. Even given a shrinking labor force, if we could increase the percentage of women working and get more elderly people into work, it would go a long way toward covering labor shortfalls.

Population decline will see economic growth induced by the population factor stop in around 2010, but because the population itself is declining, per capita national income will not fall significantly, and rationalization and labor saving should make it possible to boost productivity. If the birth rate begins to rise as of now, the aging rate will start to decline as of around 2030. We need to develop a work environment that makes it easier for women to have children and maintain their work careers.

Turning to the intake of foreign workers, because foreigners of Japanese descent tended not to renew their residence permits, they were granted the right of permanent residence so as to prevent an increase in illegal work and illegal overstaying. Their children have no choice but to live in Japan, where they are receiving an inadequate education. In addition, because the government has allowed lump-sum withdrawal payments for pensions, there are an increasing number of people without pensions. Steps that will need to be taken in the future include: (a) making Japanese language education compulsory for parents and school attendance compulsory for children; (b) elimination of the lump-sum withdrawal payment system for pensions; and (c) institution of regulations on illegal contracting and dispatching.

Kumiko Ishikawa, Professor, Faculty of Social Welfare, Nihon Fukushi University

Foreigners living in Japan include Asian "newcomers," Brazilians and Peruvians of Japanese descent who stay long-term in Japan as migrant workers, and Filipino and Chinese women who marry Japanese men and settle down in Japan, with an overall trend toward long-term stays and

long-term residence. Most migrant workers are in their 20s or 30s, and a growing number of diverse and complex lifestyle and family problems are emerging.

There has been a steep rise in international marriages, and particularly marriages between women from Asian countries other than Japan and Japanese men. Because the foreign wives have limited Japanese language proficiency, they have trouble communicating with their children, who go to Japanese schools and speak only Japanese, while communication gaps also emerge between husbands and wives because of differences in language, culture, values, and customs. In some cases, foreign spouses become stressed over relationships with in-laws as a result of language and other differences. Domestic violence and international divorces are also becoming more frequent, and there are thought to be many foreign wives who, even in very serious situations, can take no concrete action because of the language barrier and other problems.

In families where both husband and wife are foreigners, there are a growing number of cases where children don't attend school or become delinquent as a result of parents not actively pursuing their children's education because, despite the growing length of their stay, they are still intending to return home, while poor Japanese language ability prevents them from communicating with the school, and long work hours give them little time to do anything about the situation. Girls from foreign families becoming teenage mothers has emerged as another cause for concern in recent years, as well as the care their children receive.

In recent years, local governments have been making progress with the provision of living information in multiple languages, but the increasing diversity and complexity of lifestyle problems require more specialized and ongoing support. To resolve problems based on a multicultural perspective, multicultural social work addresses not just the immediate individual, but also their family, community, and other elements of their environment. In the years ahead, in addition to providing living information for foreigners, supporting Japanese language education, and improving systems for their employment, it will also be vital to provide multicultural social work and train the necessary staff to that end.

There are two types of multicultural social worker. One belongs to the language and culture of the parties involved and is well-acquainted with

Japanese culture and language; the other is Japanese, but has the ability to deal with foreigners who have diverse cultural backgrounds. Both serve to (a) support social adaptation and independent lifestyles in the community; (b) link foreigners with Japan's social system; and (c) provide a role model for the foreigners involved.

As of fiscal 2006, Aichi Prefecture has launched a multicultural social worker training course. This is designed to reshape social work from its traditional emphasis on experience into a more specialist field, as well as producing personnel who can be employed as social workers after course completion. The prefecture currently employs two multicultural social workers who have completed the course.

Future challenges with respect to foreign workers include fostering expertise, stabilizing the mode of employment, expanding the number of employers, garnering staff understanding at the organizational level, and training government and other personnel. Given that the problems faced by foreigners arise from the mutual relationship between foreigners and Japanese society, Japanese society and local communities need to change.

Yoneyuki Kobayashi, President, Kobayashi International Clinic; President, AMDA International Medical Information Center

My experience treating patients at the Yamato Resettlement Promotion Center for Indochinese refugees made me realize the difficulty faced by patients who don't speak Japanese in receiving medical treatment, which led me to establish a clinic with interpreters. Foreign patients currently account for 10 to 15 percent of our total clientele, and they come from many different countries. Japanese included, the clinic can handle seven languages. Patients' rates of enrollment in public insurance differ according to nationality, with only 7.3 percent of Thais signed up. Given that most of our patients live close to the clinic, medical care for foreigners should be regarded as part of local medical care. When the clinic opened, I received a flood of medical inquiries from foreigners, which prompted me to establish AMDA as a specialist organization providing foreigners with counseling on medical care and medical matters. Currently AMDA provides counseling for more than 4,000 cases per annum in Tokyo and Kansai. Many cases concern language problems in receiving medical treatment, but there is also a call for interpreting outside medical care.

At the end of 2006, the number of foreigners registered in Japan had risen to around 1.6 percent of the total population, which means that together with illegal overstayers and travelers, we have a large number of foreigners here in Japan. Issues that arise in treating foreigners include (a) language issues; (b) medical fees; (c) religious and popular customs and medical practices; (d) different diseases; and (e) informed consent and human rights.

In terms of the language problem, the clinic signboard, signs inside the clinic, and questionnaire forms are all written in multiple languages. Complicating the treatment of foreigners are discrepancies in the format of the maternal and child health handbooks (*boshi techo*) distributed by the various local authorities, as well as translation and interpreting issues. Medical interpreting presents problems in regard to training, payment, and liability. With reduced medical fees affecting their financial state, medical institutions cannot cover interpreting fees. One solution could be providing interpreting services via the telephone or the Internet.

As far as medical fees go, Japan's medical care and welfare system does not discriminate against foreigners as such, but application of the system differs according to the type of resident status and whether or not the patient is a registered alien. Non-payment of medical fees arises because the amount charged is more than the patient can afford. Medical institutions need to make themselves familiar with medical and welfare systems that can be applied to foreigners, and with foreign insurance systems, aiming to provide top-class medical care that is still within the patient's ability to pay for. As for religious and popular customs and medical practices, doctors need to be aware of foreign customs and ideas on medical care. Similarly, they need sufficient knowledge of differences in diseases arising from factors such as diet and climate. On the issue of informed consent, doctors must be cognizant of different ideas about Japanese medical care in advanced and developing countries, as well as the literacy issue.

The biggest problems in the treatment of foreigners are the lack of lectures on the subject in courses and training programs for medical personnel, and the failure of medical institutions to share their knowhow with each other.

A subsequent question and answer session drew on these views. Main points

were as follows.

(a) Interaction between Japanese and foreign children would make it easier for Japanese parents to accept foreigners as neighbors. We need to follow the Northern European model in granting Japanese nationality to the children of immigrants and refugees and accepting them into general daycare facilities and schools.

(b) On the issue of foreign workers, as it is industry that is making money out of foreign workers, it is only natural that industry should be expected to shoulder some of the burden and companies should be expected to contribute. It is inappropriate for the central and local governments alone to shoulder all responsibility for issues related to foreign workers.

(c) Japan's social welfare education focuses on welfare for Japanese citizens who are elderly, young, or have disabilities, but the issue of foreigners too should be dealt with as a priority issue.

(d) The growing number of foreigners has boosted the importance of multicultural social workers, and consideration should be given to fostering these human resources within the school education system. Multicultural school social workers should also be introduced into the school environment.

(e) It is difficult to apply Japan's pension system to foreigners because of the long pay-in period. However, because pension systems have yet to be instituted in some developing countries, the problem cannot be resolved by concluding social security agreements.

(f) In dealing with the problem of foreigners not enrolled in the national pension system, we have to distinguish between illegal overstayers who aren't eligible to enroll and those who are eligible to enroll but have not done so. We need to provide concrete explanations of the merits of enrolling in Japan's social insurance, and pamphlets encouraging enrollment should be left not just in government offices, but also in banks, supermarkets, and other places where foreigners go.

(g) Medical interpreting is complicated by the highly specialist nature of medical terminology, and at present there are no specialist training institutions for medical interpreting with its many difficult terms. Doctors should try to use non-technical terms in talking with patients as one means of reducing the interpreting burden.

(h) It is important to secure a high level of medical interpreting, and an Internet interpreting system would have the advantage of enabling

nationwide coverage from one point. Because the Internet could also be used for pediatric medical care in remote places, the government should provide assistance.

(i) Some people believe that where foreigners in Japan require emergency medical care, the medical assistance system should be applied as emergency public assistance regardless of the person's residence status. At the same time, given differences in living customs and language, it would be best for the patient to receive medical care in their own country, and where returning home is possible, the patient should be encouraged to do so.

3. Free Discussion among Committee Members

Based on hearings with government representatives and voluntary testifiers, on May 14, 2008, Committee members engaged in free discussion toward creating an interim report on the aspects of restoring communities related to coexistence with foreigners.

The views expressed are summarized below.

(a) Given expected trends in Japan's economic growth and population, measures to combat the declining birth rate and discussion on the intake of foreign workers need to be pursued in tandem.

(b) Measures relating to foreigners should be revised on the assumption of permanent residence, and consideration given to such matters as establishing a multicultural coexistence agency to promote a comprehensive approach.

(c) The merits of absorbing immigrants simply as supplementary labor need to be thoroughly debated and measures should not be taken hastily.

(d) Consideration should be given to granting the right to vote in local elections of local government heads and assemblies, etc., to foreigners with permanent resident status in recognition of their place as residents with a close relationship with local governments.

(e) While financial and other costs pertaining to foreigners living in Japan are borne primarily by local governments, consideration should be given to having some portion of these met by industry, which is taking in foreigners as workers.

(f) A mechanism should be created whereby foreigners coming to Japan learn Japanese and teach it when they return home.

(g) Foreigners need to be accepted as neighbors building the community together with Japanese residents. Most problems between foreigners and Japanese can be resolved through closer communication. Most problems also arise as manifestations of Japanese society's weak points, and creating an integrated society in which foreigners find it easy to live will mean working toward a society in which Japanese too find it easy to live.

(h) Given cases of illegal utilization of the industrial training and technical internship program, compliance by employers with labor laws and regulations needs to be enforced and employer guidance on the part of Labour Standard Inspection Offices strengthened.

(i) The industrial training and technical internship program needs to adhere to its original purpose of providing an international contribution. Labor conditions need to be improved and the labor intake system reconstructed as a separate entity to the trainee system. Measures also need to be taken in relation to foreign workers of Japanese descent.

(j) A framework needs to be developed for the education of foreign children at public schools, including better preparatory programs and more staff. Efforts to date have produced insufficient results, and the government needs to take a more active role. A division of functions between public schools and foreign schools, as well as partnership between them, should also be considered.

(k) Steps should be taken so that the parents of foreign students can be involved in their children's education from various angles, and places also need to be created where students can feel secure.

(l) Many foreign schools are treated as private tutoring schools and consequently have weak financial foundations. Given the public contribution these schools make, support measures need to be bolstered, including relaxing standards for "miscellaneous school" authorization, expanding subsidies, and applying preferential tax measures for donations.

(m) In regard to the issue of providing emergency medical care for foreigners on humanitarian grounds, the medical assistance system should be applied regardless of the person's resident status, and greater financial assistance must be provided through local governments.

(n) Foreign children who commit crimes require special consideration

and care. At the same time, it is also important to find out why the crimes in question were committed and take measures to prevent further crimes.

III. Proposals on Coexistence with Foreigners

The 1990 revisions to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, which granted the right of long-term residence to foreigners of Japanese descent, or ethnic Japanese, have set Japan's intake of foreigners on an upward trajectory. In 2006, in fact, a total of 2.08 million foreign residents were registered in Japan, a substantial 310,000 of whom were Brazilians. Driving this trend has been the absorption of foreigners in a range of capacities as a means of securing international competitiveness in the face of economic globalization.

Initially, it was assumed that ethnic Japanese would stay in Japan for around three years and then return home. Certainly, the majority did return home, but recent years have seen a growing number staying on in Japan and bringing their families over as well to take up long-term residence. These ethnic Japanese also tend to cluster in certain cities and certain areas, where various problems have consequently arisen in regard to, for example, communication with local residents and children's education. Many ethnic Japanese apparently also shift house when they shift workplaces. The registration of address changes is a social imperative in terms of the exercise and fulfillment of administrative rights and obligations, but local governments from areas where large numbers of foreign workers live note that the latter's failure to report address changes is causing problems with tax payments and the provision of administrative services.

Ethnic Japanese and many other foreign workers are non-regular employees, dispatched or contracted as manual labor. Many of these foreign workers have not enrolled in pensions, medical insurance, or other forms of social insurance, causing major problems in their lives in Japan.

Further, when foreigners take up long-term residence in Japan with their families, this raises the issue of their children's education. The children of foreign workers can be educated at foreign schools or at public schools. However, because foreign schools are not licensed as school corporations, many struggle with finances and facilities. Public schools, on the other hand, currently do not have adequate systems in place for dealing with foreign children in terms of staff allocation, etc.

Given the above situation, and recognizing that foreigners are no longer temporary visitors but rather our neighbors and part of Japanese

society, the time has come to redesign our approach to foreigners in Japan.

The theme of the Committee's study is restoring and strengthening communities, and within that theme we have focused particularly on how to facilitate coexistence with foreigners in the community. Addressing a broad agenda, including coexistence with foreigners in local communities, coexistence with foreigners in the labor market, education for foreign children and others, and social security for foreign workers, we have endeavored to identify the various challenges pertaining.

Based on these efforts, the recommendations of our Committee on immediate challenges are as follows. We call on both the Japanese government and Japanese companies to grasp the purport of our recommendations and to work toward their realization.

A. Policies toward Coexistence with Foreigners

1. Japan's policies in regard to foreigners tend to have been developed after the fact, with foreigners already entering Japan in response to a labor shortage. However, given the current situation, whereby foreigners are demonstrating a marked tendency to take up long-term residence rather than simply working here temporarily, we need to revisit these policies in order to avoid future problems for Japan. In so doing, one critical issue will be to design and operate systems for identifying the Japanese language abilities of foreigners when they enter Japan and for promoting Japanese language education for their children.
2. In the preparations currently underway for revisiting Japan's residence management system, we should aim for both appropriate management of foreigners residing in Japan and the provision of appropriate services to foreign residents to ensure that they are not unreasonably disadvantaged.
3. As part of the local community, foreign residents must be supplied with the necessary information in a timely and appropriate manner. To this end, the central government should reference front-running efforts by local governments and the views of key figures and non-profit organizations, etc., toward the effective and efficient provision of information.
4. As foreigners too are important community members, we need to discuss mechanisms that will enable their participation in community management.
5. Given the many complex and multi-faceted challenges that arise in seeking

to coexist with foreign residents, an organizational framework should be established which adds to the existing liaison council of relevant ministries a ministerial meeting among the same ministries, as well as an institution to take on comprehensive responsibility for measures related to foreigners.

B. Coexisting with Foreigners as Workers

1. Utilizing the diverse skills and experience of foreigners represents an effective means of maintaining Japan's economic and industrial vitality, and Japan should continue to absorb foreign workers with a particular focus on those human resources with specialist knowhow and advanced skills. In areas where chronic labor shortages are expected, it has been suggested that consideration should be given to phased expansion of the intake of foreign personnel who meet certain requirements in terms of skills, qualifications, and Japanese language ability, etc. Such a move would have to be premised on consideration of jobs for Japanese citizens, and accordingly, more intensive national discussion that acknowledges local and industrial realities.

2. Many foreigners are engaged in unstable, non-regular employment on a dispatch or contract basis, requiring them to work long hours for low wages. There have also been instances of disguised contract labor. The government must strengthen its guidance to ensure that employers conform to labor laws and regulations and to encourage subscription to social security and employment insurance.

3. Japan has recently experienced an accelerated influx of foreign trainees seeking to acquire skills, but this has been accompanied by problems such as improper conduct on the part of training institutions and trainee disappearances. Urgent improvements need to be made to the trainee intake system and stable operation enforced so that the system can fulfill its original purpose as an international contribution. Legal protection also needs to be extended to trainees receiving training in Japan, including application of the Labor Standards Act, the Minimum Wage Law, and other labor-related laws and regulations, to ensure a fairer and more legitimate system.

4. The necessary conditions should be set in place to enable stable employment in Japan for those foreigners who have acquired Japanese qualifications as nurses and care workers, etc.

C. Improving the Education System for Foreign Children

1. Given that all children have the right to receive an education, and that coming to Japan for reasons such as accompanying a parent represents a change in the education environment beyond the control of the child, due consideration must be given to the education of foreign children in Japan. A key issue in this regard is the acquisition of Japanese as a second language and as an academic language, requiring the training and deployment of specialist teachers familiar with language acquisition stages, etc. Assistance should also be provided to elicit the participation and cooperation of guardians.

2. When foreign children are taught Japanese, they need to acquire not just basic interpersonal communication skills, but also sufficient academic language proficiency. Tools for accurately gauging levels of Japanese language acquisition therefore need to be developed and utilized, and a more detailed grasp acquired of the actual situation in regard to those foreign students lacking adequate academic language proficiency.

3. Because many foreign children are not attending either Japanese or foreign schools, a national survey should be undertaken as soon as possible to grasp the actual extent of non-attendance.

4. Given that foreign schools play an important role in supplementing public schools and in providing the opportunity to learn in one's native tongue, appropriate steps should be taken toward designating them as schools in the miscellaneous category. In addition, as companies employing the parents of foreign children also have an important responsibility in terms of developing the education environment for these children, consideration should be given to instituting tax breaks for corporate donations to foreign schools.

5. While the education of foreign students at public schools could be improved through pre-admission guidance and the appointment of more teachers and teaching assistants, adequate results have not been achieved due primarily to financial constraints and a lack of specialist teachers and teaching assistants. The central and local governments need to take steps toward serving a more proactive role through, for example, budget allocations.

D. Improving the Living Environment for Foreigners

1. The many foreigners living in Japan who remain unenrolled in medical insurance represent a serious problem that impacts on both the income of medical institutions and the finances of local governments. Local governments need to take carefully-targeted steps to encourage foreigners to sign up, such as providing information on medical insurance enrollment in places where foreigners gather. To ensure emergency medical care for foreigners who haven't enrolled in medical insurance, consideration should be given to expanding the system of subsidies covering foreigners' unpaid medical bills, and to application of the medical assistance system.
2. To help foreigners living in Japan to feel more comfortable about receiving medical care, administrative institutions need to make information available in multiple languages. There are also numerous issues requiring resolution in regard to the training, payment, and dispatch of medical interpreters, and consideration should be given to developing a system that makes interpretation available nationwide via the Internet.
3. The medical examination and treatment of foreigners require that medical personnel deal not only with language issues, but also acquire the necessary understanding of foreign customs, ways of thinking, and types of illness. Consideration should therefore be given to covering these issues in the curricula of medical courses and training programs for doctors.
4. Both public servants and specialist staff handling healthcare, medical services, and welfare need to recognize that foreign residents too are entitled to receive the various types of administrative services, and this will require awareness-raising, training, and collaboration among the relevant institutions. In addition, because problems such as spousal violence or a child's refusal to attend school can in some cases arise from special circumstances, it will be vital to train and deploy multicultural social workers to deal with the problems confronting foreigners. Efforts need to be made to increase the number of such social workers, while the understanding and support of local governments will be critical in securing talented personnel.

Appendix

List of Members of Research Committee on Aged Society with Declining Birthrate and Society of Cooperative Way of Life

Chairperson Masami Tanabu (DP-SR-PN-N)

Directors Hisako Oishi (DP-SR-PN-N)
Tomiko Okazaki (DP-SR-PN-N)
Kiyoshige Maekawa (DP-SR-PN-N)
Haruko Arimura (LDP-GI)
Chieko Nohno (LDP-GI)
Yoko Wanibuchi (NK)

Members Kumiko Aihara (DP-SR-PN-N)
Tsukasa Iwamoto (DP-SR-PN-N)
Emiko Uematsu (DP-SR-PN-N)
Masako Okawara (DP-SR-PN-N)
Yukishige Okubo (DP-SR-PN-N)
Yoshitake Kimata (DP-SR-PN-N)
Yataro Tsuda (DP-SR-PN-N)
Koshin Fujitani (DP-SR-PN-N)
Renho (DP-SR-PN-N)
Midori Ishii (LDP-GI)
Yosuke Isozaki (LDP-GI)
Ichiro Tsukada (LDP-GI)
Toshiharu Furukawa (LDP-GI)
Tamayo Marukawa (LDP-GI)
Hiroyuki Yoshie (LDP-GI)
Hiroshi Yamamoto (NK)
Tomoko Kami (JCP)
Mizuho Fukushima (SDP)

Note:

DP-SR-PN-N The Democratic Party, The Shin-Ryokufukai, The People's New Party and The Nippon

LDP-GI Liberal Democratic Party and Group of Independents

NK	New Komeito
JCP	Japanese Communist Party
SDP	Social Democratic Party

RESEARCH OFFICE

Third Special Research Office

Research Committee on Aged Society with Declining Birthrate
and Society of Cooperative Way of Life

House of Councillors

1-11-16 Nagata-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0014, Japan

Tel: +81-3-3581-3111 Ext. 3143

Direct dialing: +81-3-5521-7682

Fax: +81-3-5512-3917

Printed in Japan