

The future role of The Society for East Sea

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1. Evaluation on past achievements

Twenty years have passed since the Korean government launched an effort to officially raise the issue of the *East Sea* appellation at the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSSGN). From that time onward, the Korean government has continued in its efforts to persuade the international community of the legitimacy of the concurrent name usage of both the *East Sea* and *Sea of Japan*. Twenty years is very short in our human history, but relatively long enough to achieve something meaningful. During this time we have achieved more than what we had reasonably believed we could, but not more than what we might have hoped. I do not underestimate the modest achievement we have made because I know very well that it was an uphill battle to deal with countries which are not interested in changing the status quo. Yet, our efforts were very successful in the field of cartography.

Many cartographers in the world have been changing their stands from the use of sole name, *Sea of Japan*, to the simultaneous use of both names, *East Sea / Sea of Japan*. This is one of the greatest achievements made by The Society for East Sea under the auspices of the Korean government.

2. Strategy for future role

Japan does not show any hint of compromise. Bilateral consultation with Japan is at a standstill and no progress is in sight. Although we appreciate the efforts made by the IHO to break the deadlock, it only reveals its incompetence. The IHO seems to simply take the position that Korea and Japan, the two countries directly concerned, should

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agree through dialogue before it takes any action. Such attitude of the IHO is irresponsible because it lacks the will to solve the issue. The IHO seems to set its priority on publishing the 4th edition of S-23 rather than solve the issue in an earnest manner.

Under such circumstances, a solution is far from being realized. In order to make a breakthrough, we need a renewed determination and a fresh start. I know that historical and geographical studies on the issue has already been exhausted and the outcome has turned out to be in our favor. It supports our position. Therefore, we need a more refined policy direction, a renewed political approach based on realistic and practical policy options and a recourse to international law.

Among other things, what is important is our efforts towards the United States.

3. Diplomatic demarche toward the United States

1) US government

The US' role and attitude are essential in securing support from other countries and the BGN of the State Department is at the center stage of US policy for naming issues. But the US government is said to have recently submitted a letter to the IHO supporting the name, *Sea of Japan*, as the sole designation. Therefore, our effort should be focused on convincing the US government, specifically the State Department, of the serious political implication of the issue.

The US should be awakened to the stark reality that improved relations between Korea and Japan are necessary for the maintenance of peace and stability in the region. Tension between Korea and Japan will be detrimental to the US security interests in the region. The *East Sea* issue combined with other pending issues such as Dokdo, Comfort Women, etc. will have a negative ripple effect on United States security interests. In this regard we need to encourage the US government not to take any action that can be interpreted as unilaterally taking sides with Japan. The US' indifference to the *East Sea* issue will be understood in the same vein. We urge the United States government to play a constructive role in this regard.

2) Opinion makers of the United States

We should step up our efforts to approach the US media and academic circle by explaining our logic and position very clearly. We should help them to have accurate information so that they can spread the truth of the *East Sea* name. Their influence can be huge in encouraging the US government to reevaluate its position.

3) US Congress

We know the significant role played by the US Congress which represents the views of their constituents. We can take advantage of the influence of the Korean community in the United States as a pressure group. In this regard the recent episode that took place in the State of Virginia merits our attention. The State Senate introduced a bill to mandate textbook publishers to use *East Sea* along with *Sea of Japan*. It is very encouraging because it has symbolic importance. Although the Senate rejected it by a very narrow margin, a 7-8 vote, it attests to the fact that the *East Sea* name has been gaining wide acceptance. We need to revitalize this momentum for our future endeavors. There is growing recognition in the United States of the justification of the dual use of both names.

Therefore, we need to strengthen our approach to individual congressmen of all States of the United States to raise their awareness of the seriousness of the issue and point out that the US BGN has no will to seriously solve this issue based on historical facts and international law. We have a couple of references as precedent. When I was working at the Korean embassy in Washington, D.C., an important issue facing us was the Taiwanese government's secret plan to export nuclear waste to North Korea which was cash-strapped at the time. However, we successfully convinced the US Congress to help dissuade the Taiwanese government from exporting nuclear waste to North Korea through increased one-on-one contacts with individual congressmen. We left no stone unturned to help the congressmen to realize the seriousness of the issue. As you all know, at that time, the US' primary security concern was the denuclearization of North Korea.

4. Conclusion

The Korean government's claim on the name, *East Sea*, can be justified in light of the historical facts and principles governing geographical names. Many countries came to support our position. *East Sea* has been widely accepted and will be used in maps of almost all countries in the not-too-distant future. Despite such undeniable facts and support from many map makers, the IHO and its member states are incapable of dealing with this issue. Moreover, in the foreseeable future, chances are very slim for Korea and Japan to reach an agreement because of Japan's intransigent attitude and lack of pressure by the international community. Against this backdrop, The Society for East Sea needs to devise a realistic methodology in cooperation with the Korean government. The annual seminars should be focused on policy formulation. Among other things, the most important task for The Society for East Sea is to appeal to the international community, more specifically the United States.