

Panel discussion

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Good afternoon distinguished colleagues and participants

1. Let me begin by saying how pleased I am to be able to be part of this discussion and share my thought at this wrap-up session.
2. I am deeply impressed by the commitment and dedication of the Society for East Sea and Northeast Asian History Foundation in organizing this seminar every year since 1995. As I have mentioned already, my personal interest and commitment towards this issue goes back to 1992 when I began working on this issue as a member of the Korean delegation to the United Nations. So I applaud especially the Society for East Sea for its respectable achievement.
3. I have listened carefully to all the presentations and discussions during the seminar and have learned a great deal. At this moment, I would like to take a few minutes to share with all of you a few thoughts that have occurred to me while participating in this seminar.
4. In my opinion, there are two main pillars to dealing with this case: one is historical and cultural heritage perspective and the other is internationally accepted rules on the standardization of geographical naming.
5. Firstly, from the historical and cultural heritage perspective, Japan's insistence on the exclusive use of "*Sea of Japan*", together with its jurisdictional claim over "Dokdo", demonstrates its intention to continue to uphold its unjust historical legacy, rather than rectify it.
6. At present, there is much talk of Japan's war time legacy and the Japanese government's reluctance to look squarely into its past. Such behavior is not only unethical and immoral but also runs counter to widespread effort to promote international justice. International efforts to rectify past injustices have grown tremendously over the last two decades or so. Just look at the creation of International Criminal

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Court in 2003 to deal with gross human rights violations war crimes and war crimes tribunals that have taken place to address conflicts in the Former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Cambodia. Of course, what we are discussing today falls short of producing as grave consequences as the cases that I have just mentioned and is vastly different in nature and character. Therefore, I do believe that the case of East Sea must be viewed within a larger context and understood as part of a broader trend that calls for international justice.

The *Sea of Japan* was adopted as the official name of the body of water which lies between Japan and Korean in 1929 by the IHO simply because no competing names were put forth as a possible alternative. Korea as well as many other Southeastern Asian countries were occupied by Japan at the time. Hence, what was decided back in 1929 was done under unfair circumstances. So what I want to emphasize is the historical injustice that must be corrected in accordance with the current international trend of seeking justice for past wrongs.

7. Secondly, from the perspective of internationally accepted rules on the standardization of geographical naming, what is important for us for now is to help develop and translate ideas and proposals into fuller strategy and muster political and diplomatic support. In order to do so, we first need to examine whether these ideas are “doable” and “practicable” under present circumstances, and if so, what the potential drawbacks and weaknesses are.

On the proposal for a new resolution, I must confessed that I am biased because in 1998, I returned to UNCSGN as head of the Korean delegation in my capacity as Director General of the International Organizations Bureau of the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to push forward draft resolution entitled, “Standardization of Names of Maritime Features Beyond Single Sovereignty” to be debated and adopted during plenary session of UNCSGN. The resolution was intended to serve as a framework for standardization of geographical names and thus attracted broad support of the drafting committee. However, faced with Japan’s strong and stubborn opposition at the plenary session, the committee fell short of adopting a resolution and instead adopted a Chairman’s summary which recommended the continuation of the discussion of the matter at the 1999 UNGEGN, urging the concerned parties to reach an agreement at the earliest date. So what was learned from the 1998 episode?

Whether we came to bearing fruit or whether the attempt to adopt a resolution was

bound to fail, I think it is important to have an objective evaluation on this matter and a new resolution before moving forward. With a proposed draft resolution, I think what we need to do next is to assess the resolution objectively and critically. This is not to say that I have reservations about the proposed draft resolutions but simply to help us keep aware of the experience of the 1998 episode and do our best to maximize the chances of the adoption of the resolution. To do so, we must exert all efforts to improve upon the existing rules, identify gaps and clarify any ambiguities with a goal of ensuring that the rules are able to address current problems effectively.

8. Last not but least, on a slight different note, there has been a significant progress concerning the use of dual names on maps. A considerable number of flagship maps of major mapmakers and textbooks has adopted simultaneous use of both names. And some maps use *East Sea* as primary name so there has been a measurable progress in dual naming.
9. In view of such development and the UN Secretariat's position of adhering to its "customary practice of using the most widely used name", I believe that it is time to renew our demand to the United Nations to use both *Sea of Japan* and *East Sea*, or at least provide a footnote concerning the *East Sea* in all of its maps. What the Society for East Sea needs to do is to make full efforts in actively engaging the Korean government and the United Nations in this endeavor.