

Experts Discuss Solutions to Japan's Declining, Aging Population

Seiichi Kikuya

May 15, 2015



Sapporo, Japan—Japan's aging and fast-declining population is a growing issue of concern for the consequences it could have on the country, including Japanese municipalities, some of which could disappear in the future. Committed to finding solutions to this issue with experts on the topic, UPF-Japan and its Council of Ambassadors for Peace organized the International Leadership Conference (ILC)—Japan 2015 in nine major cities throughout the country.

The first ILC event was held on June 21 in Sapporo, capital of Hokkaido Prefecture, on the theme: “Families in Crisis and Visions for their Revitalization—Emergency in Decreasing Children and Japan's

Options.”

The first speaker, Mr. Kazu Matsui, former chairman of the Board of Education of Saitama Prefecture, stressed the importance of parents intimately nurturing and caring for newborn babies and children in building a peaceful local community. He said: “Japan must reinvigorate traditional family values. Child nurturing used to be essential in forming family bonds. As parents take care of their newborn babies and children, they develop parental hearts and grow as real parents.”

Representing UPF-Japan, Dr. Yong Cheon Song, chairman of UPF-Japan, spoke about traditional family features in Japanese society, and said that as a result of modernization, Japan's tradition of appreciating family ties, has weakened. “Western visitors to Japan in the final years from the Edo Period [in the late 1860's] to the Meiji Restoration [from 1868-1912] were amazed by Japan's family scenes. Where have they gone?”

He also said that Japan could exercise greater international leadership by reviving its traditional values. “Japan's population is declining and aging at a speed unseen in the world. If Japan can provide valid solutions to these social challenges, it will be able to offer solutions to [social and other issues in] and a direction to [other] Asian nations.”

The third speaker, Mr. Seiichi Kikuya, secretary general of UPF-Japan, outlined why Japan's population is declining: people are marrying later or not marrying at all, which has led to an (1) increase in the number of individuals dying alone, (2) a decrease in the capacity of local communities to prevent and respond to disasters, (3) erosion of rural cultures, and (4) recession in rural-based industries.

Mr. Kikuya proposed promoting marriage, child-bearing and family values among young people as well as a national campaign to “build sound and harmonious families” as solutions to this growing issue.

A panel discussion, coordinated by a university professor, concluded the event. A local government assembly member, an elementary school teacher and a local Parent Teacher Association representative spoke about family issues and educational challenges in Hokkaido.

University professors; members of Japan's parliament, the National Diet; and administrators at various education institutions, were among those who attended the first ILC, and contributed many questions and opinions to the discussion.