

The First Yao City Foreign Residents' Council Meeting in FY 2014

[Minutes]

Date & Time: July 25 (Fri.), 2014, 7:00 pm – 8:40 pm

Place: Conference Room No. 701, 7th Floor, Yao City Office

Participants:

(Council members): Ms. TOKI Hikaru (Chairperson), Mr. OKUNO Tsunehisa (Vice-Chairperson), Ms. PARK Koon-ae (council member), Ms. Emmanuelle LOUBET (council member), Ms. LE THI KIEU Nga (council member), Mr. Ian YATES (council member), Ms. KOZAKURA Michika (council member), Mr. PARK Yanghaeng (council member), Ms. FUJITO Satomi (council member)

(Secretariat - Culture and International Affairs Department): Mr. MATSUSHIMA (Manager), Mr. KAWAZOE (Assistant Manager), Ms. Matsuzuki (Group Chief)

1. Opening of the Council Meeting

2. Future Council Meeting Schedule

[Secretariat] The secretariat explained the schedule for this year's Council meetings, based on Material 1.

[Vice-Chairperson] The schedule for this year's Foreign Residents' Council meetings is shown in Material 1. The second meeting will focus on "promotion of measures to establish a multicultural society in local communities."

[Council member] Isn't one of the second meeting's topics, "promotion of measures to establish a multicultural society in local communities," dealt with in Material 5?

[Secretariat] Material 5 shows some of the measures to promote the establishment of a multicultural society.

[Chairperson] The two scheduled Council meetings this fiscal year will provide you with an opportunity to confirm the progress of the "Yao City Plan to Promote a Multicultural Society" and exchange views about priority projects of the Plan.

3. Progress management of the "Yao City Plan to Promote a Multicultural Society"

[Secretariat] The secretariat explained this, based on Material 2.

[Chairperson] To ensure the implementation of the Plan, we'd like you to give us your views on how to manage the progress of the Plan, including the format of the "progress survey sheet", ways of entering information on the survey sheets, and other measures to manage the progress than using survey sheets.

[Vice-Chairperson] The City government will confirm the progress of the Plan based on the information coming from the sheet shown in Material 2. Do you think this system will work? Are there any other methods that would enable citizens to participate in confirming the progress of the Plan? Please let us know what you think about how to reflect Council members' opinions in proceeding with the Plan.

[Exchange of opinions] **Topic: Progress management of the “Yao City Plan to Promote a Multicultural Society”**

Group A

[Council member] The progress survey sheet you gave us is too small; there is not sufficient space to include everything I want to write about the progress of the Plan over the past year. I think two separate columns are needed in the sheet so that we can enter separately the current situation of the Plan and the problems to be addressed.

[Chairperson] The Secretariat has proposed that after fiscal year 2015 begins, this survey sheet will be used to report the results of FY2014 and to develop specific plans for FY2015 to implement the Plan at the same time.

[Council member] If the FY2014 results are reported after the year ends, it may be impossible to secure sufficient budget for FY2015 or reflect problems identified in the plan for FY2015.

[Chairperson] I am also afraid that if the FY2014 results are reported after the year ends, it will be too late to modify the plan for the next fiscal year. It is better to assess the progress of the Plan within the period during which we can modify the plan for next year. Local governments in Japan usually perform progress management of plans they are in charge of, whatever the plans are, by coordinating the views of related departments in writing. Is there any other method? Immediately after the new fiscal year begins, various Plan-related departments of the City government ask persons in charge to submit completed survey sheets for the progress in the previous year, and the persons in charge have to respond quickly.

[Council member] It would be a waste if they end up with paper-based interaction only.

[Council member] I would like to confirm the objective of this sheet. Is it to reflect the **current** problems in the plan not for FY2015, but **FY2016**, because it is difficult to incorporate them in the FY2015's plan? I think it is better to use such letters as A, B and C in the sheet in evaluating goal attainment levels, in addition to writing comments. It would be even better if the reasons for the evaluation are also given in the sheet. Focusing on problems identified in evaluating both goal attainment levels and the proposed plan for the next year will enable us to move to the next step. Filling in the sheet should not be an end in itself.

[Chairperson] Completing the sheet is not an end in itself. You all are requested to use the sheet to evaluate in an easy-to-understand way how much progress has been made so far.

The column of “New proposals” in the sheet is for suggesting things not included in the current Plan, but I think what has already been incorporated in the Plan should be carried out first.

[Council member] If the set targets for each year are exceeded substantially, “new proposals” would lead to the further development of the Plan and they should be welcomed.

[Council member] After all, what is the objective of this sheet?

[Chairperson] Once the Plan has been developed and decided, related departments of the City government are in charge of carrying out the Plan. The Culture and International Affairs Department uses this survey sheet to supervise the steady implementation of the Plan. It is meaningless to complete the sheet unless it is made best use of.

[Council member] I am afraid submitting the sheet will be the only goal we have, and it may be possible that unsuccessful measures will not be referred to in the sheet.

[Chairperson] I want the Culture and International Affairs Department to work as the coordinator to ensure the steady implementation of the Plan. I hope the Department will adopt a focused approach to ensure the progress of the Plan, even if it is slow.

Summary of Group A members’ opinions

- Wider space to write in is needed on the progress survey sheet.
- The current status of the Plan and problems to be addressed should be described separately.
- The objective of the sheet is not only to report on the results. It is important that the evaluation be performed before it become impossible to reflect identified problems in the following year’s plan and to modify the following year’s plan.
- Completing the survey sheet should not be an end in itself. It is necessary to create clear targets and evaluate achievement levels in figures.
- The Culture and International Affairs Department should serve as the coordinator to make all related departments fully understand the objective of the Plan and to ensure that individual related departments play their assigned role in the implement of the Plan.

Group B

[Council member] It is necessary to check that specific measures incorporated in the “Yao City Plan to Promote a Multicultural Society” have been implemented steadily. The Culture and International Affairs Department is considering of using the progress survey sheet shown in Material 2 to confirm the progress of the Plan. Do you think progress management can be performed by using this “progress survey sheet” method? Do you think there is a need to ask for comments in Council meetings, etc.? If you have any ideas about a good method to confirm the progress of the Plan, please let us know.

[Council member] I would like to be sure that specific measures planned under the Plan, as shown in Material 2, are implemented by the individual departments in charge. Is this clear?

[Vice-Chairperson] Yes. That's right.

[Council member] Who will check whether they are implemented appropriately? If only the city administration is supposed to check it, citizens are not involved in checking.

[Vice-Chairperson] The city administration will check it. If many of you think checking only by the city administration is not sufficient, we can give an opinion that some sort of opportunities should be offered for citizens to express their views." The city administration is in charge of reflecting the results of checking—the current status and identified problems—in preparing the survey sheet.

[Council member] It is desirable to fill in the sheet in such a manner that readers can see how measures taken under the Plan have led to the solution of foreign citizens' problems. We should not place numerical targets above everything else.

[Vice-Chairperson] How problems were addressed is important.

[Council member] Whenever I respond to a questionnaire survey, I wonder whether I should place more emphasis on quantitative or qualitative results. It's difficult. Which I put emphasis on can affect the evaluation of the progress of the Plan.

[Vice-Chairperson] Council members who engage in the development of measures for the Plan and the preparation of survey sheets, please tell us about concrete efforts you've made related to the Plan.

[Council member] For example, speaking of education programs for children, I think it is more important to help as many participants as possible to make friends and to be themselves rather than to make efforts to increase the number of participants. This is one of the programs that cannot be assessed appropriately based only on quantitative results.

[Council member] Citizens cannot see whether their views are reflected in the Plan or not. What do you think about conducting a questionnaire survey, or holding interviews with foreign residents, on a school zone-by-school zone, or neighborhood association-by-neighborhood association basis?

[Council member] It is difficult to see on the full picture from only a written survey. I think conducting interviews is best.

[Vice-Chairperson] Although citizens do understand that the Plan has been developed and it has to be carried out, many of them have not been fully informed of the details of the Plan. How can we reflect the views of citizens who understand the content of the Plan but feel that the Plan has not been advanced steadily?

[Council member] It is difficult for citizens to know whether their views have been reflected or not, and

it's also difficult for those who feel their views haven't been reflected to communicate what they feel to the persons in charge. Conducting questionnaire surveys is a simple and effective method, but I am afraid it may lead to putting an emphasis only on quantitative results.

[Vice-Chairperson] When evaluating the progress of the Plan, we should not put emphasis only on quantitative results. It is also meaningless to write in vague generalities and present only idealistic arguments. It is difficult to say what emphasis should be placed on when evaluating, quantitative or qualitative results.

There are some possible methods, for example, conducting a questionnaire survey, providing citizens with an opportunity to express their views in person, and having citizens evaluate the progress of the Plan, instead of departments in charge of the City government. Although there is a method in which citizens research to what extent the Plan has been implemented and report the results to the public, but it's difficult. The important thing is to keep citizens informed of whether the Plan is being implemented steadily.

[Council member] I think it is difficult to evaluate the progress of the measures to promote “symbiosis between Japanese and foreign residents—a minority in Japan,” based on quantitative achievements. The important viewpoint is how the measures helped individual foreign residents, and how glad they are as a result. Reports clearly expressing how foreign residents used a certain measure and how the measure helped him/her feel better are desirable.

For example, speaking of workshops for promoting the human rights of foreign residents, I do not think they should be held every year. If holding such workshops is in the plan for the year, the City government department in charge may be forced to work hard to hold them. However, holding workshops must not be an objective in itself.

[Vice-Chairperson] The Plan should not be implemented to fill in the progress survey sheet with the results of the Plan. It's difficult to evaluate government activities.

[Council member] As for “Payment of welfare benefits to elderly foreign nationals living in Japan” on page 30 of the Plan, we can make clear the numbers of qualified recipients and actual recipients. This is an issue where quantitative results are important.

[Vice-Chairperson] I hope that the Culture and International Affairs Department will advise other departments involved in the Plan to have a perspective of “self-evaluation” to make the evaluation of the progress more effective and meaningful.

Summary of Group B members' opinions

- Group B includes members involved in developing measures to implement the Plan and having to undergo evaluation of their achievements. Group B members exchanged views on evaluation methods beneficial for Yao citizens, including foreign residents.

- In some cases, it is appropriate to evaluate measures based on their quantitative achievements; however, from the standpoint of foreign residents, who are a minority here in Yao, it is more important that measures to promote the Plan be evaluated, based on qualitative achievements. Foreign residents place more importance on qualitative improvement and meaningful reform made by taking the measures. When filling in the progress survey sheet, respondents should describe based on which results they evaluate, quantitative or qualitative. This will make a difference in how to carry out measures to implement the Plan.
- It is desirable to compare the evaluation performed by the City administration with that performed by citizens. Is it possible to conduct interviews with foreign residents on a school zone-by-school zone basis or on a neighborhood association-by-neighborhood association basis?

4. The Multilingual Emergency and Disaster Support Center

[Secretariat] The secretariat explained this issue, based on Materials 3 and 4.

[Chairperson] Explanation of the Multilingual Emergency and Disaster Support Center

The Multilingual Emergency and Disaster Support Center project is for setting up an organization at time of disaster to give support to foreign victims, mainly by offering information in multiple languages, in cooperation with disaster victims, various organizations within the affected areas, and supporting organizations outside the areas. The project was initiated by the NPO National Council for Multicultural Corporate Managers after the Niigata Chuetsu Earthquake occurred in 2007. Currently the council is promoting this project around Japan so that regional Multilingual Emergency and Disaster Support Centers can be set up and managed smoothly in times of major disaster.

Set up in affected areas, regional Multilingual Support Centers will provide foreign victims with information coming from the disaster headquarters, etc. and conduct the following activities to ease their anxiety and help them return to a normal life:

- 1) To grasp the situation of foreign victims (number and locations of foreign victims, the languages, support they need)
- 2) To provide foreign victims with necessary information from the disaster headquarters, embassies and the immigration bureau, by priority, within a restricted time frame
- 3) To translate various kinds of information offered in Japanese into multiple languages and provide them for foreign victims in a variety of ways
- 4) To visit refuge centers to meet with foreign victims and offer them information that could lead to the solution of their problems, etc.

The NPO National Council recommends that regional centers be funded publicly and managed privately. In case of Yao City, the Yao City Multilingual Emergency and Disaster Support Center will be funded by the City government and managed by the Yao International Center, NPOs and other private organizations. Next year, Yao City will start to prepare for the establishment of the Yao City Multilingual Emergency and Disaster Support Center in a time of disaster. To ensure the Center works reliably, I would like you all to offer a variety of local information that would help us offer the necessary

information to foreign residents who need help in times of disaster—for example, where many foreign residents would be very likely to gather when a disaster occurs, where we should visit to grasp the situation of many foreign residents, and what department(s) of the City government and what regional organizations the Center should forge an especially close relationship with, on a normal basis.

[Exchange of opinions] Topic: Yao City Multilingual Emergency and Disaster Support Center

Group A

[Chairperson] I would like to ask your opinions in relation to the Multilingual Support Center, to ensure the Center works reliably at a time of disaster. I also want your advice about how information should be offered to foreign residents.

[Council member] When will the Yao City Multilingual Emergency and Disaster Support Center be set up?

[Chairperson] The Center will be set up after a major earthquake occurs. The Center will start operation after refuge centers are set up in the City. However, I think it is necessary to provide disaster prevention information such as an evacuation warning, even before refuge centers are set up.

[Council member] I have set my cell phone to receive an emergency bulletin mail when a disaster like a major earthquake occurs.

[Chairperson] I think it would be good if there was a system under which an emergency mail is sent directly to the cell phones of foreign residents when an earthquake occurs.

[Council member] At disaster sites, if there is a power blackout, we cannot use PCs. I have heard radios were useful during the Great East Japan Earthquake disaster. How about putting radios on the list of relief supplies? It would enable information in multiple languages from Yao's community radio broadcasting station (FM Chao) to be offered. It is important to take the procedures to start emergency broadcasting beforehand.

[Council member] How about having FM Chao make an announcement in multiple languages at the time of disaster? Is it possible to contract FM Chao to broadcast in multiple languages in a time of disaster?

[Chairperson] Do you have any other information, such as information about local groups and communities of Yao?

[Council member] Foreign families with school-age children should establish a close relationship with their children's schools.

[Council member] The Human Rights Education Department is aware of the numbers of students of

foreign nationality enrolled in individual schools in the City. Individual schools can find out which children's families need support in multiple languages.

[Chairperson] As for foreign families having no connection with schools in Yao, is there any good way to find out what families need support in multiple languages?

[Council member] Is it possible to ask the Chamber of Commerce and Industry to inform foreign residents of the Multilingual Support Center via its member companies who have many foreign employees? How about using Yao Healthcare Center? Many foreign residents visit the center.

[Council member] How about churches? Many foreign residents go to church regularly.

[Chairperson] When a disaster occurs, foreign residents are very likely to evacuate to churches which are familiar to them, instead of going to refuge centers.

[Council member] Can embassies and consulates serve as contacts with foreign residents?

[Chairperson] From experience, I would say it is impossible. Staff members of the Yao International Center, City government officials in charge of promotion of the "Plan to Promote a Multicultural Society" and private citizens will function in case of a disaster. Has a community wireless system been prepared in Yao City yet?

[Secretariat] Yes. Broadcasts are delivered over the community wireless system with loudspeakers installed on utility poles etc. in individual areas.

[Chairperson] Only in Japanese? I think it would be good if it is possible to deliver broadcasts in multiple languages over the system. We should make efforts to train volunteers speaking multiple languages on regular basis. Otherwise, we will not be able to address the urgent needs for support in multiple languages.

[Council member] Is it possible to set up a kind of "Disaster Prevention Month," during which leaflets about disaster prevention in multiple languages are handed out in local community centers? Leaflets handed out should include information about the Multilingual Support Center, emergency contact number(s), locations of refuge centers to be set up in a time of disaster, and the like. No one knows where to go to obtain the information/support he/she needs in his/her language.

In addition, it is necessary to let foreign residents know the basic rule that they can also use refuge centers in times of disaster.

Summary of Group A members' opinions

- Efforts are necessary to make it possible for FM Chao and the community wireless system to provide broadcasting in multiple languages.

- A proposal was put forth to prepare a kind of emergency contacts card that foreign residents can carry with them at all times (a card including information about emergency contacts and locations of refuge centers) and then to set up “Disaster Prevention Month” to make the Support Center, etc. known to foreign residents.
- The Human Rights Education Department of the Board of Education is aware of the numbers of students of foreign nationality enrolled in individual schools.
- It may be possible to reach foreign families without school-age children through the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- It is necessary to train volunteers and interpreters speaking multiple languages, on a regular basis.

Group B

[Vice-Chairperson] First, we will consider your questions regarding the Yao City Multilingual Emergency and Disaster Support Center, and then, I would like to ask for your ideas about how to collect information, etc.

[Council member] According to Material 4 “Relationship Diagram,” the “Response Team for Foreign Residents in Need of Assistance” is within the Center, but it should be within the Yao City Government, because that is easier to understand. I think it is better the City government serve as a leader, with support from the International Center.

[Council member] Is the Support Center a permanent organization, or is it set up only when a disaster occurs?

[Vice-Chairperson] Normally it seems to be a kind of “virtual organization”. With a system and staff ready to deal with emergencies, it will begin operation in the event of a natural disaster.

[Council member] According to Material 4, normally, the Yao International Center is in charge of recruiting disaster volunteers (to give support to foreign residents), and in the event of a disaster, the Yao City Social Welfare Council serves as a disaster volunteer reception center. This is confusing. It is better only one of them does this work at any time.

[Council member] What kinds of information is exchanged with embassies and consulates?

[Council member] When foreign residents wish to return to their home countries, if their passports are lost in times of disaster, it may be necessary to exchange information between the Support Center and their countries’ embassies/consulates.

[Vice-Chairperson] To ensure the Multilingual Support Center functions well, it is necessary for the Center to collect information about foreign residents on a regular basis. We would like to ask for your advice about where most foreign residents would be likely to gather when a disaster occurs and what department(s) of the City government and what regional organizations the Center should forge an especially close relation with, on a normal basis.

[Council members] Schools, the Yao International Center, Tokkabi, religious institutions such as Christian churches, art-related facilities, ethnic restaurants, etc.

[Council member] If it is possible to be in contact with key persons in each district, they may offer information about foreign residents in the district.

[Council member] When gathering information, personal information must be handled with extreme caution.

[Council member] Schools have information not only about the numbers of foreign students and families, but also which foreign families need support in a language other than Japanese.

[Vice-Chairperson] Schools can serve as support bases for foreign families with school-age children. As for those without close contact with schools, it is considered that many of them visit the International Center, churches, temples, art-related facilities, etc.

[Council member] When a disaster occurs, where will the Support Center be set up?

[Council members] It will be set up within the International Center, won't it?

[Council member] It is necessary to inform foreign residents that in the event of a disaster, the International Center serves as the Multilingual Support Center, not as a refuge center.

[Vice-Chairperson] The main task of the Multilingual Support Center is to transmit important information in multiple languages, not to provide relief supplies or food. It is necessary to inform foreign residents of this matter.

Summary of Group B members' opinions

- Some part of Material 4 "Relationship Diagram" needs to be improved.
- It was confirmed that the Multiple Emergency and Disaster Support Center starts operation when a disaster occurs.
- Regarding how to collect and review information which would help give assistance to foreign residents in the event of a disaster, it is possible to communicate with schools for information related to foreign residents with school-age children, and the International Center, Tokkabi, religious institutions including churches, and art-related facilities for information related to other foreign residents. In addition, when gathering information, personal information must be handled with extreme caution.

5. Exchange of opinions about other matters

[Secretariat] The Secretariat explained about Materials 5 and 6.

[Council member] As for Material 6, when analyzing the results, it is necessary to know who answered

the individual questionnaire sheets, Japanese or foreign residents. And, as for the questions about neighborhood associations, the answer “it is not necessary for foreign residents to join neighborhood associations in their communities” could have a different meaning depending on whether it was given by neighborhood association members or by non-members. It would be difficult to analyze the results of this questionnaire survey unless respondents are asked to answer the questions together with their reasons. Then I do not understand the objective of this planned questionnaire survey.

[Secretariat] As for the questions about neighborhood associations, we considered asking for reasons to answers, but we gave up because there are many questions in the questionnaire and therefore it would be difficult for us to obtain many respondents if we asked for reasons to each answers.

[Vice-Chairperson] As for Question 1 asking the future direction of a multicultural society, if you obtain many negative answers, how would you make use of them? And will you ask Japanese citizens Questions 2 and 3 as well?

[Secretariat] Questions 2 and 3 are to ask both Japanese and foreign citizens their views on the current situation based on which the future development of the Plan will be discussed. If there are many negative answers regarding the promotion of a multicultural society, we will promote public awareness activities.

[Chairperson] I have an impression that these questions are designed on the assumption that “the current neighborhood association participation rate of foreign residents is low.” I think the survey should be conducted not only on residents’ attitudes on promotion of a multicultural society. The survey should include positive questions, such as those on the recognition of the Plan and those asking for proposals of possible solutions for daily problems in communities.

[Secretariat] Currently we are considering what kinds of questions are appropriate to grasp the current status of foreign residents living in individual regions, in promoting a multicultural society in the City. This planned questionnaire survey is intended to clarify, for example, whether many foreign residents do not want to join neighborhood associations, or whether they cannot join although they want to do so.

[Council member] Such questions as “what do you think of the participation of *foreign residents* in neighborhood associations/community events?” should not be asked to foreign residents.

[Council member] Is it necessary to consider Japanese and foreign residents separately?

[Council member] As for Question 3, I have an impression that the question is intended to ask *Japanese residents* what they think of the participation of foreign residents in community events.

[Secretariat] With the promotion of a multicultural society in mind, the City has been encouraging its residents, whether Japanese or foreign, to join neighborhood associations in their areas to have them

forge close ties with their neighbors.

[Chairperson] The system of “neighborhood associations” is unique to Japan. I wonder whether efforts have been made to explain the system in an easy-to-understand way, to foreign residents with completely different backgrounds.

[Council member] Replace the word “foreign residents” with “the physically challenged.” What do you feel?

[Secretariat] The neighborhood association participation rate in Yao City is higher, compared with other municipalities. The City believes the lower participation rate will lead to the weaker relations between local residents. The City is considering of making use of neighborhood associations in promoting a multicultural society in the City.

[Chairperson] What is the neighborhood association participation rate of foreign residents in the City?

[Secretariat] We do not know what the rate is. It is difficult to ask the nationality of individual neighborhood association members and local event participants.

[Council member] I have the impression that the planned survey is based on the assumption that the participation rate of foreign residents is low.

[Secretariat] We must admit that the explanation about the purpose of the questions is insufficient. The questions are not intended to ask whether foreign residents can participate in local community events or not. We hope to communicate the importance of building a strong community through local community activities.

[Vice-Chairperson] Regarding Question 1 as well, I do understand the Secretariat’s explanation that it is designed to find how “Yao City’s promotion of a multicultural society” is recognized by its citizens; however, I do not understand how the answers to this question can be used.

[Chairperson] Question 2, “What do you think of the participation of foreign residents in neighborhood associations?” may prejudice respondents, leading to exclusion of foreign residents.

[Secretariat] The questions presented in Material 6 are only suggestions. We would like to review them based on advice you have offered here in this Council meeting.

[Council member] Without questionnaire sheets prepared in multiple languages, the planned survey will not have many respondents. After the target respondents are identified, it is necessary to identify the languages in which questionnaire sheets should be prepared. Otherwise, the survey will not get many foreign respondents.

[Chairperson] In relation to both the progress management of the Plan and the Multilingual Emergency and Disaster Support Center as well, I hope that members of the Culture and International Affairs Department will serve as coordinators to steadily promote the Plan, through communicating personally with the heads of related departments and forging a close relationship with related organizations. I also hope that instead of ending up as merely paper-based communication, effective ways of promoting the Plan will be devised.