

February 10, 2009

Mr. Taro Aso, Prime Minister of Japan:

Mr. Dmitrii Anatolievich Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation:

***Request for Development of a Joint Japan-Russia World Natural Heritage Site
“Japan-Russia Peace Park”***

It has come to our attention that the Japan-Russia Summit will soon be held on 18th February at Sakhalin Oblast, at which the Kuril Islands dispute will be one of the topics discussed. We, the Non Profit Organization The Association for Japan-Russia Peace Park are writing to respectfully request the cooperation of President Medvedev and Prime Minister Aso for the development of a “Japan-Russia Peace Park” World Natural Heritage Site, which we first proposed in the spring of last year.

The proposal consisted of proclaiming the need to expand the World Natural Heritage Site Shiretoko to include the four disputed Kuril Islands and Urup vicinity as soon as possible. This is necessary to protect the entire area of sea overlapping the Japan and Russia borders, as the islands belong to the same eco-system as Shiretoko. This area of sea is home to a rich natural environment brought forth from sea ice flow. There, sea otters and Japanese crane migrate back and forth without regard to the man-made border that separates Japan and Russia, and large numbers of Blackston’s fish owl, brown bear, inhabit the area as well. When the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the organization responsible for evaluating world natural heritage sites, registered Shiretoko in 2005, they presented the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Japanese government with a Technical Evaluation Report. This report points out that, “It is clear that Shiretoko and the neighboring archipelago share similar environment and ecology,” and proposes that the region could be a possible candidate for an extensive natural heritage site in the future. In order to make this proposal a reality, we established the NPO “The Association for Japan-Russia Peace Park.” Our current environmental problems cannot be solved by just one country alone, and if Japan and Russia cooperate with each other to preserve the beautiful natural environment from Shiretoko to Urup, it would play a big role in strengthening the friendship between our two countries.

According to the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, registration and expansion are possible even with property which is still being disputed, as long as both countries agree. Article 11 Section 3 specifies the registration of such property “shall in no way prejudice the rights of the parties to the dispute.”

In order to make Japan-Russia Peace Park a reality, we would like to make the following proposals: ① Japan and Russia to collaborate on a wide range of information gathering and

provision projects which include ecosystem surveys of the islands to the global southern limit for ice flow, ② in order to do this, for Russia to establish an NPO as a foundation to ensure the motivations and goals are the same for both countries, ③ hold regular meetings at least once every six months in order to bring together the wisdom of the government and people of both countries and cultivate a vision for the future to promote the preservation of the ecosystem and the sustainable use of resources. It is our hope that both Japan and Russia can cooperate with one another on this matter in the spirit mutual understanding.

NPO The Association for Japan-Russia Peace Park President

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