

Reports on the internship at the United Nations Human Rights Committee  
(United Nations Human Rights Committee, Geneva)

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## I. Introduction

I experienced three weeks of internship, from June 20th to July 15th 2016, during the 117th session of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (“ICCPR”) that is hold in the United Nations Human Rights Committee (“HRC”) in Geneva, and worked as the assistant of Professor Yuji Iwasawa, Vice-Chairperson of HRC. Experiences at HRC and other international organizations provided me with fruitful insights and changed my mind about future career. In this essay, I would like to describe my experiences at the Committee and what I learned through the internship.



## II. Experiences as an assistant

### (1)The experience on state reporting system

The main work as the assistant to Professor Iwasawa was to draft questions related to human rights situations in member states. On ratifying the ICCPR, states are bound to report under Article 40 of the ICCPR. Article 40 requires that within one year an initial report is made and subsequently, periodic updates are made every four years or when specifically requested by the committee. The state's delegation appears before the Human Rights Committee in Geneva to discuss the report, in a public process usually referred to as an 'examination' but officially termed a 'dialogue with the State Party'. At the end of a session HRC issues 'concluding observations' on each state, using the report, the dialogue, and any other relevant information submitted by the other organizations and NGOs. This is called state reporting system under ICCPR.

HRC consists of independent experts that monitor the implementation of ICCPR of

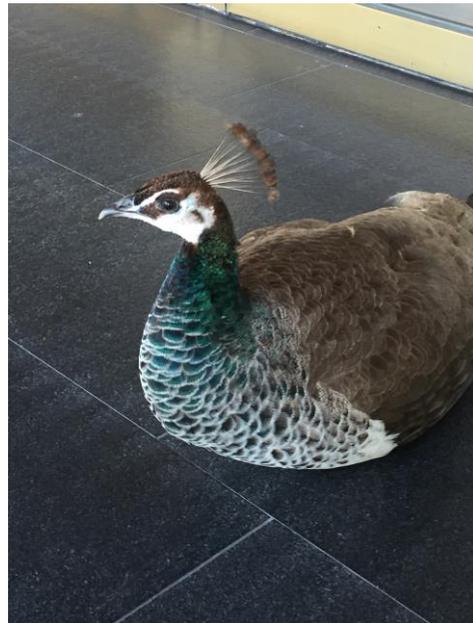
member states on the previous procedure and Professor Iwasawa is the one of those experts. Each expert prepares in charge of 3 or 4 countries at each session. In this session, Professor Iwasawa was in charge of Denmark, Burkina Faso. There are three assistants for Mr. Iwasawa and I was assigned to make questions for Ghana, which related to:

- (a) Non-discrimination and equality focused on disabled person, persons living with HIV/AIDS, persons with albinism and LGBTs.
- (b) Right to privacy focused on the problem of secret tape recordings of Ghanaian politicians
- (c) Rights of the child focused on the problem of low birth registration rate.
- (d) Freedom of opinion and expression in Ghana
- (e) Dissemination of information relating to the Covenant and the Optional Protocol

I made a thorough research on human rights situations in Ghana, using the reports of international organizations and NGOs and revised drafts based on feedbacks from Professor Iwasawa.

Making those questions was really interesting experience for me. Through making those questions, I was surprised by two things.

The most surprising thing was that the real situation was indeed changed by the recommendation of experts. At the dialogue with Denmark, the delegation of Denmark explained what was changed from the past dialogue and promised to change the situation on current human right infringement. Not just Denmark but also the other states changed the situation of human right violation. The states have the obligation to report how the situation is changed to HRC so many States obey the recommendation of HRC. I've thought that states wouldn't obey the recommendation because it wasn't boundary but they changed considering the reputation from international society. It was really impressive. Since that time I could believe the power of international treaty's mechanism and changing situation structurally is possible. It was the first time for my responsible country, Ghana to submit the report to HRC. I wish Ghana also change the situation under the



recommendation.

I was also impressed that NGOs has so important rule in this reporting mechanism. Each expert doesn't have the local information and experts and their assistants utilize the reports of NGOs. NGOs join the meeting and informal press release that is hold for experts to exchange opinions with NGOs before the dialogue with the State Party. Sometimes, at this informal press conference, experts understand the real situation of the human rights situation of the country and change the questions they prepare. I studied the important role of NGOs and this experience changed my mind about NGOs.

The experience of making questions improves my English skill also. Professor Iwasawa kindly gave me advice many times when I made the draft of questions. I revised my drafts 7 times. He taught me how to make effective questions. Thanks to this process, I could understand the difference between Written language and speaking English and how to make clear questions.

(2)The experience on Individual complaints procedure

HRC has the jurisdiction to examine individual complaint concerning the violation of rights contained within ICCPR, by virtue of the First Optional Protocol to the Covenant. Advising for the Individual complaints is also the important role for HRC.

Professor Iwasawa are fulfilling important rule to make advisory opinion for those Individual

complaints in HRC. I also supported it by researching the deposition case under ICCPR and European conventions on human rights (ECHR).

I'm really interested in this deposition matter because I would like to major in immigrant and refugee problems. This research gave me the idea of my thesis.

Observing the working style of professor Iwasawa is also precious experience for me. HRC consists of prestigious scholars, judges and lawyers all over the world so sometimes, collisions of opinions were occurred. Professor Iwasawa mediated those opinions. He was always calm and cooperative with his colleagues. Though the other



colleagues came to the meeting room delayed, he is always punctual. He doesn't speak like native speaker of English but he read all Individual complaints and made insightful opinion in simple words. I can get the hint of how to survive in international working place by utilizing the virtue of Japanese by his working style.

(3) Interacting with the other assistants and visiting to officials in Geneva

Not only Professor Iwasawa but also other experts brought assistants along. Interacting with the other interns is great opportunities for me. We talked about our plans for the future and how to build our career. Many of them are multilingual speakers. I fully realized that I should study more about foreign languages.

Thanks to Professor Iwasawa's introduction, I could meet many prominent practitioners. This experience helped me to clear my future plan.

### III. Acknowledgments

I could experience this great opportunity because Law Center at the University of Tokyo and sponsored companies, which funded me prior to the internship. In addition, I received kind assistance from Professor Iwamura, Professor Kanda, Professor Fujita, Ms. Koaze and Ms Kawamura with preparation for the internship. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of them. Last but not least, I would like to express special appreciation to Professor Iwasawa who kindly received me as his assistant, and let me know so many things from how I should pursue my career as a specialist and how I could build the relationship of mutual trust with the person who has the different cultural back ground. I'm convinced that it will be the greatest experience to change my life. I really thank all persons concerned from the bottom of my heart.

