

For immediate release:

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House Committee Approves Filipino Comfort Women Resolution 124

March 11, 2008, Tuesday – The Philippines' House Committee on Foreign Affairs approved today HRN 124, a resolution expressing the sense of the Philippine House of Representatives and to back the Filipino comfort women's demand to seek for official apology and legal reparation from Japan for its crimes on many adolescent Filipinas during WWII.

Upon adjournment of the hearing earlier conducted by the house foreign affairs committee, cheers and applause resounded in the Batasan's RMV Conference Room 14 as committee chairman Hon. Antonio Cuenco, who presided the hearing, pronounced the committee's blessings to the resolution on comfort women. Representatives of the Department of Foreign Affairs(DFA), Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) also gave their favorable positions to the pending resolution. Just before the conclusion of the proceedings of the committee hearing, each one was asked by the committee chair if they hold any objection to the resolution being tabled to which all three agencies replied in the negative.

HRN 124, or House Resolution No. 124 (Expressing the Sense of the House of Representatives that the Philippine Government Urges the Government of Japan To Formally Acknowledge, Apologize and Accept its Responsibility Over the Sexual Slavery of Young Women...) submitted in the 14th congress, succeeds many other similar resolutions submitted in the house in the past 16 years.

The now aging victims who survived the Japanese military sexual slavery system who attended the hearing were emotional after the favorable pronouncement by the committee chairman, as this is the first resolution that was passed at the committee level throughout their many years of lobbying in the house.

In the last 7 months, countries such as the U.S., Canada, Netherlands, and the European Union have recently adopted resolutions in their parliaments in support of the "comfort women." The Republic of Korea and the Legislative Yuan of Taiwan have long put into legislation their demand for redress from Japan. The adoption of HRN 124 by the Philippines' congress will intensify the international pressure on Japan to address their legal responsibilities to the victims.

The said hearing was attended by the representatives of all the existing WW II survivor groups of Japanese wartime sexual atrocities, i.e. the Lila Pilipina Lolos, the Malaya Lolos and the Lolos Kampanyera. The said resolution was authored by Reps. Lisa Masa and Luz Ilagan of the Gabriela Women's party list, and by Rep. Eduardo Zialcita of the district of Paranaque (Lakas party) and several other lawmakers. Atty. Harry Roque (UP Law professor), Ms. Mariquit Soriano, Nelia Sancho and Natalie Kaye Ganipis (supporters of the Lolos Kampanyera Organization and representatives of the Buhay Foundation for Women and the Asian Women Human Rights Council), Corazon Requiso (supporters of the Malaya Lolos and representative of the Kaisa Ka Women's Group), Rechilda

Extramadura (coordinator of the Lila Pilipina Lolos group) also gave their statements to endorse the tabled resolution on the comfort women issue.

The approved resolution will be presented at the plenary of the House of Representatives for approval as soon as it is subjected to "style" and submitted to the Committee on Rules for endorsement.

(Please refer to attached photos at the committee hearing held today, March 11, 2008 from 10 AM to 1130 AM at the Conference Room 14 of the Ramon Mitra Building, Batasan Pambansa).



Photo No. 1 Caption: Speakers at the committee hearing both from the government agencies and civil society organizations supporting the comfort women survivors in the Philippines are present at the roundtable.



Photo No. 2 Caption: House Committee on Foreign Affairs Chairman, Rep. Antonio Cuenco (of the Lakas administration party) poses with Lolos Kampanyera survivor representative – Lola Julia Porras, 79 and Ms. Nelia Sancho, Lolos Coordinator holding her granddaughter, Fiona Isabel, 10 months old.