

Prime Minister's Announcement on the Solution of the Minamata disease Issue

(December 15, 1995)

(Cabinet Decision)

A period of 40 years has passed since the initial manifestation of the Minamata disease issue, and the issue of ascertaining the origin of the related environmental pollution. Attributable to the cooperation of countless people, we have been able to witness the realization of mutual consent between the concerned parties and the subsequent resolution of the Minamata disease issue.

Relating to the Minamata disease issue, and separate from the already resolved issue of compensation to legally certified patients for environmental pollution and health damage, until today the problem of relief to those who could not receive certification, remained unresolved.

To facilitate the swift settlement of this issue, I have exerted my greatest and sincerest effort, in gaining the close collaboration of the ruling party and the local government. I would like to express my respect for the efforts of the members of each group, which struggled to reach a resolution given the burden of the solemn history behind this issue, and also for the efforts of those other concerned parties.

With the resolution of the Minamata disease issue, I offer my deepest condolences to those who have passed away, surrounded by a great sense of pain and regret. When I think of the sentiments of the numerous people who were forced into agony and suffering beyond description over the many years, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of regret.

The Minamata disease issue not only caused serious damage to human health, but also had a widespread and far-reaching influence on the local community, impairing the bond between local citizens.

I would like to take this opportunity upon the resolution of the Minamata disease issue, to express my heartfelt wish that the people of areas affected by Minamata disease, will be able to hold hands and work together to build a local community which can live in harmony.

Whilst I believe the government did all it could within its power as required periodically, now when we look back on the period from the initial outbreak of the Minamata disease issue to today, I believe we must reflect candidly on the extended period of time, which was necessary in establishing the origin of Minamata disease, including the second outbreak of Minamata disease in Niigata, and the precise way of dealing with offending company. I have made a fresh resolve that this kind of terrible environmental pollution never be repeated again.

In accordance with the resolution of the Minamata disease issue, the government, working together with the local government, plans to promote measures regarding the Comprehensive Minamata Disease Medical Care Project, support for Chisso, and the regeneration of Minamata, as well as encouraging greater development of the country's environmental policies, by humbly learning from the tragedy of Minamata disease. Further, we intend to contribute on an international level by making a positive effort to apply our experiences and technology to other countries of the world.

(This is an unofficial English translation)