

## Foreign Ministry Sponsors Student Debate on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Peaceful Utilization

On September 22, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) sponsored a debate among college students to let them hone their ability to make arguments, and the theme of the final round dealt with nuclear nonproliferation and the peaceful utilization of nuclear power. The winning team came from the University of the Sacred Heart, Tokyo, an all-female school.

The precise debate topics were as follows: (1) "The Japanese government should not reduce its official development aid (ODA) below current levels, despite huge fiscal deficits and calls for drastic spending cuts, in view of Japan's status in international society;" and (2) "Japan should oppose giving any sort of cooperation in the area of nuclear power to a country that possesses, or is newly developing, nuclear weapons, outside of those 'nuclear-armed states' as mentioned in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)." The first theme was debated upon by all four participating teams, and the winners from the first round went on to debate the second theme in the final round.

According to the NPT, the official nuclear-armed states are the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China; other countries known to have nuclear weapons include India, and those suspected of developing them include North Korea and Iran. Recently, the United States has been arguing for active cooperation with India, an NPT non-signatory state, in its peaceful utilization of nuclear power. That situation served as the background to the debate.

MOFA solicited participants for the debate contest through its Internet website and other means, and then selected the four teams (composed of three members each) deemed most worthy based on their applications. The first round of the debate, dealing with the ODA question, matched the Waseda University team with the University of Tokyo Graduate School team, and the University of the Sacred Heart, Tokyo, team with the Keio University team.

The format of the debate was as follows: the student teams were not assigned "pro" or "con" positions until the day of the debate, after which they were given time to prepare their argument; only oral arguments were allowed, without the use of such props as slides; each round of the debate lasted 45 minutes.



**The Sacred Heart team**

The winners of first round then moved to the final round, and the team from the University of the Sacred Heart, Tokyo, argued in favor of the proposition (i.e., against cooperation with countries that developed nuclear weapons), while the team from Waseda University argued against it (i.e., in favor of such cooperation).

In its argument, the Sacred Heart team divided and organized the countries into NPT signatory states and non-signatory states, and pointed out the problems of a safeguard application system, alluding to the possibility of countries coming to possess nuclear weapons after withdrawing from the NPT. The team also said that cooperating with non-signatory states would have the effect of hollowing out the NPT, citing the possibility of the exodus of equipment and technology to third-party nations as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). They made the argument that "some say that cooperation [with non-signatory states] would result in

the strengthening of the nonproliferation framework, but that scenario is uncertain and fraught with risk.”

Meanwhile, the Waseda team, arguing for the necessity of cooperation with states owning or developing nuclear weapons outside the NPT framework, said that attention should be paid to the “right” of states to develop and utilize nuclear power under the conditions of the NPT. It emphasized the following points, among others: (1) Cooperation would lead to a strengthening of the nuclear nonproliferation framework, (2) It would contribute to the stability of petroleum prices and global warming countermeasures, and (3) Japan, with its world-class technology, naturally ought to support cooperation, with a big role for industry, supported actively by the government.

In the conclusion to its winning argument, the Sacred Heart team asserted, “Not only is nuclear nonproliferation in the interest of the whole world, but also in the national interest of Japan.” Meanwhile, the Waseda team wrapped up its argument by saying, “ The stability of the world economy will lead to Japan's stability.”

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