



# **Report on the Interpretation and Dialogue**

Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution:

Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding, and Coal Mining (Japan) (ID: 1484)

**CABINET SECRETARIAT  
JAPAN**

# Report on the Interpretation and Dialogue

## Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding, and Coal Mining (Japan) (ID: 1484)

### 1. Executive Summary

The Government of Japan created this Report on the Interpretation and Dialogue to respond to those requests noted in the 45th World Heritage Committee Session Decision (45 COM 7B.167) adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 45th session. Prepared jointly by the Cabinet Secretariat, relevant ministries and agencies, local governments, and other parties concerned, this report is based on the “*Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Kyushu-Yamaguchi and Related Areas, General Principles and Strategic Framework for the Conservation and Management*” (hereinafter referred to as “Strategic Framework”). The Report also includes updates on the progress in responding to the recommendations and requests in each Decision to date of the World Heritage Committee.

Our summary of responses to Decision 45 COM 7B.167 is as follows:

#### **(1) Matters relating to further measures to strengthen the interpretation strategy of the Site (Paragraph 6 and 7)**

The Government of Japan is continuously collecting various documents including new testimonies and will continue to carry out expert analysis and verification in the “Industrial Heritage Information Centre (IHIC)”, as well as enhancing the exhibits, with a focus on primary sources with clear provenance and testimonies that have been verified to a certain degree of credibility.

#### **(2) Matters relating to continued dialogue between concerned State Parties (Paragraph 6 and 7)**

The Government of Japan has been engaging in dialogue with the governments of concerned State Parties, including the Republic of Korea, and will continue to do so.

The Cabinet Secretariat took into consideration of the opinions from domestic and international members of the Expert Committee on the Industrial Heritage including Working Properties, established in line with the Strategic Framework, on September 9, 2024, and appropriately reflected their feedback in this report. The National Committee of Conservation and Management for the Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution, established as a venue for the

mutual exchange of views and discussions with relevant government ministries and local governments, met on October 28, 2024, and approved this report. This process ensured all due communication and solid consensus-building among the various parties involved with working and non-working component parts of the property.

## **2. Outline of responses to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee**

The replies to each of the matters requested are summarized below. See the Main Document for details.

### **(1) Matters relating to further measures to strengthen the interpretation strategy of the Site (Paragraph 6 and 7)**

The Government of Japan has responded sincerely to each decision of the World Heritage Committee and has faithfully addressed these in line with the statement made by the Government of Japan at the time of the inscription on the World Heritage List in 2015. It has endeavoured to base its interpretation on objective facts, such as by properly exhibiting primary sources of clear provenance and testimonies verified to have a degree of credibility.

Particularly, in the working paper portion of Decision (45COM 7B.167) presented to the World Heritage Committee at its 45th session in September 2023, the section on the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS, and ICCROM analysis and conclusions indicates that Mr. Lazare Eloundou Assomo, Director of World Heritage at UNESCO World Heritage Centre, having visited the IHIC, confirmed the implementation of the following five new measures.

- 1) In “Zone 3” section related to all the coal mining accidents in Hashima Island during World War II and after is being installed to remember the victims of coal mines at the IHIC. This new section includes:
  - A QR-code linked to the video of the 2015 World Heritage Committee decision, thus allowing direct access to statements made by both Japan and the Republic of Korea at the time of the inscription of the site.
  - Historical documents illustrate the harsh conditions through the display of (i) “Monthly security reports” and (ii) “Security Logbooks” that indicates the number of fatalities in coal mining accident and cause of the accidents. Victims include all the nationals who died at Hashima Coal Mine in wartime.
- 2) QR code linked to the video of the 2015 World Heritage Committee is included in Zone 1 of the IHIC;

- 3) The State Party has informed that interpretation tools and IHIC exhibit will be shared with all visitor centres, and will ensure consistency that:
  - QR-code is displayed in the 8 visitor centres, which covers all the 23 component parts of the site, thus allowing visitors to access the website of the IHIC and the video of the 2015 World Heritage Committee; clarifying interlinkages between component parts, consistent with enhanced interpretation strategy;
- 4) Upgrading the open stacks in the Zone 3 library with extensive and diverse published books and printed materials related to industrial heritage and industrial labour collected for research and analysis. This includes:
  - A looping slideshow of introductory information about (i) fatalities inside the Hashima Coal Mine; (ii) Applications for Cremation Permit Issuance of workers from the Korean Peninsula,
  - Inclusion of a selection of 8 new books about the best practices in terms of interpretation strategy of heritage sites.

The State Party informed that “Application for Cremation Permit Issuance” will also be displayed if the original and authentic copy is provided.
- 5) Incorporation of artworks illustrating the daily life of coal miners including working environment, which will be pursued via annual special exhibitions at the IHIC.

In conclusion, the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies have affirmed that Japan has invested significant efforts and resources into responding to the Committee’s requests, and progressed in delivering on its commitments which should be recognized.

On this basis, since the Government of Japan was requested to conduct further research, data collection and verification to strengthen the interpretation strategy of the Site in the decision of the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee in September 2023, the government has carried out new initiatives related to the following A) to E) based on the requests in the decisions by the World Heritage Committee and the Interpretation Strategy the government formulated in 2017. The exhibits will continue to be enhanced, mainly with primary sources with clear provenance and testimonies that have been verified to a certain degree of credibility.

- A) Further research, data collection and verification, including regarding new testimonies (45th Decision, Paragraph 6)

As for historical materials concerning the industrial working conditions during World War II, further research, data collection and verification were carried out; and in November 2024, testimonies of former residents of Hashima Island and primary sources pertaining to the Hashima Coal Mine were put on display in the IHIC, while testimonies of workers from the Korean Peninsula were made available as reference materials for research.

The IHIC will continue enhancing the exhibits, mainly with primary sources with clear provenance and testimonies that have been verified to a certain degree of credibility.

- B) Interpretation strategy showing how each site contributes to Outstanding Universal Value and allows an understanding of the full history of each site (39th Decision, Paragraph 4 g; 44th Decision, Paragraph 6 a)

At this Site, common interpretation presentations of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) are being introduced in the visitor centre of each area, training is being offered to ensure interpretation is carried out with consistent content, and various other initiatives are being taken to deepen cooperation with the local authorities in each of the eight areas across the country and to strengthen interpretation common across each area.

Significant progress has been made in explaining the OUV of the entire series as local interpretation centres have been developed. This has included integration of the series OUV story into all interpretive products, including print and electronic publications, public lectures, on-site and directly related off-site installations, educational programs, community activities and ongoing research and training. Older interpretive centres are being progressively updated to present the linkage between all components of the series, and their interlinked OUV. Some sites using existing interpretation facilities will continue to update information and make plans to improve the interpretation of the sites consistent with the series.

An interpreters training program for capacity building is being offered at IHIC and at each visitor centres with IHIC collaboration. In the IHIC, ongoing efforts are also being made to enhance the historical materials on the industrial working conditions around the time of World War II, to enable better understanding of the full history of each component part.

To further improve public access, the IHIC is now open on more days of the week, and work is underway on making exhibits available online and with support for multiple languages.

- C) Measures to allow an understanding of a large number of Koreans and others brought against their will and forced to work under harsh conditions, and the Japanese government's requisition policy (44th Decision, Paragraph 6 b)

The IHIC has archived the historic documents, records and statistics related to industrial labour during World War II including those from the Korean Peninsula since the IHIC opened in March 2020. Every year newly collected information with clear provenance is shared in the archive or exhibition.

The IHIC has worked closely with the local coal mine museums, former residents of Hashima Island, universities, corporations and government agencies to collect historic documents and records from primary sources which illustrates the work environment under harsh conditions during and after the World War II. Also, the IHIC shared the historic documents about Japanese government's requisition policy from primary sources to the public via exhibition. The IHIC also has been supporting the research and data analysis of historic documents and materials, in the last 2 years, such as comparative analysis of wages and benefit of industrial labour including coal miners from the Korean Peninsula. Such research has been conducted by domestic and international experts from the Republic of Korea.

- D) Incorporation into the interpretation strategy of appropriate measures to remember the victims such as the establishment of an information centre (44th Decision, Paragraph 6 c)

Incorporation of new information is a continuing process at the IHIC. For example, newly found historic documents related to a gas explosion that occurred at the Hashima Coal Mine during World War II (in which five people died) were added to the exhibition. So, too, were ten documents entitled Hashima Practical Course Reports, which include detailed observation about mining activities and working environments in the Hashima Coal Mine during the war, as studied by Kyushu University students before the war, from November 2024 were added to the exhibition at the IHIC. Interpretation of this new information will be presented in the exhibition in the coming years.

The IHIC collected new testimonies about "the Days and Life on Hashima Island" and working conditions in the mine from a former resident of Hashima Island who worked

as an engineer and worker in the mine. The IHIC added those testimonies to the digital archives in November 2024.

This year, the IHIC organized a temporary exhibition of the Sakubei Yamamoto collection, inscribed as UNESCO Memory of the World in 2011, that testified daily life of coal mining in the Chikuho region in Kyushu during the late Meiji era and into the later twentieth century. In 2024, this exhibition will be organized regularly at the IHIC in close collaboration with Tagawa Coal Mining Museum which has the largest collection of Sakubei Yamamoto's work. Besides the exhibition at the IHIC, the Sakubei Yamamoto collection was promoted as part of the network of regional industrial heritages and cultural heritages as well as other component parts of the Site through its Augmented Reality Map and Guide Application of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution.

- E) Best international practice for interpretation strategies on the interpretation of the full history of the property both during and outside the period covered by its OUV and in the digital interpretation materials (42nd Decision, Paragraph 9, 44th Decision, Paragraph 6 d)

Under Cabinet Secretariat's guidance, the IHIC has been working with domestic and international experts on the interpretation strategies of the full history of the property both during and outside the period covered by its OUV in the digital interpretation materials and constantly upgrading the exhibition with the application of best international practices.

Ongoing efforts are being made by the IHIC in collaboration with local museums in order to enhance the historical materials on the industrial workers with special focus on wartime working conditions during and after the World War II, to enable to better understand the full history of each component part of series.

In 2024, the IHIC installed a high-definition large-screen LED display. The IHIC plans to use this large screen to share the historic photos and movies from the archive in 2025.

The IHIC website and guide application content will be upgraded regularly to enable the IHIC exhibits to be viewed at any time, from anywhere in the world.

The Gunkanjima Digital Museum in Nagasaki City uses cutting-edge digital technology such as projection mapping and VR to show the lives of Hashima Island residents in the past and conditions in the restricted areas that cannot be seen on land tours of Hashima Island.

**(2) Matters relating to continued dialogue between concerned State Parties  
(Paragraph 6 and 7)**

Since the World Heritage Committee at its 45th session on September 2023, the Government of Japan has continuously engaged in inter-governmental dialogue with the Republic of Korea. For the period from the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee to November 2024, the Government of Japan held official dialogues with the Republic of Korea at various levels, for multiple times, including those between the Director-Generals in charge of UNESCO affairs. The Government of Japan is committed to continuing such dialogue, including explanation of the interpretation policies.

**3. Signature of Authority**

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the Japanese characters '石坂 聡' (Ishizaka Satoshi) written in a cursive style.

ISHIZAKA Satoshi  
Director-General, Department of Industrial Heritage, Cabinet Secretariat,  
Government of Japan