

**Statement of the Opposition to the National Women's Education Center
on
Its Plan to Demolish and Abolish the Training and Accommodation Buildings
21st December 2024
NWENET: The Civilian Network for the Preservation
of the Training and Accommodation Buildings
at the National Women's Education Center
(translated interim by Akitsugu Taki)**

The National Women's Education Center is highly likely from the next fiscal year on flattening and losing the buildings for training, accommodation, etc and not the main building. Once the buildings are demolished, their functions cannot be redeemed. This plan is being undertaken by the government of Japan under the name of the strengthening of the functions in the promotion of 'Men's and Women's Co-Participation' officially translated as 'gender equality'. For this purpose the present cabinet is in the process of submitting the related bill as early as at the ordinary session of the Diet beginning in the end of January 2025.

The National Women's Education Center (NVEC) was established at Ranzan Town, Saitama Prefecture for the purpose of promoting women's education. It serves as domestically the only facility of its kind that contributes to training, exchange, information and research. It is a valuable facility with the accommodation building with a capacity of about 350 people, the training building usable for 1500 people, a large conference room suitable for international conferences, an important archive center for women studies and an information center for women's education housing nearly 150,000 books.

Among NVEC's projects forums for the promotion of men's and women's co-participation with some other initiatives of NVEC's have offered to a good number of citizens including local women's associations and scholars from all over the country opportunities to take the initiative carrying out their own courses and holding sessions for reporting and exchanging their activities. These projects have accumulated prominent results. The lively exchange of opinions and information only achieved through overnight stays and face-to-face meetings has empowered women, created a sense of solidarity and fostered nationwide women locally active and their networks. It is NVEC that has carried this irreplaceable function.

While the national budget for NVEC is tapering off, however, the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and

the National Women's Education Center (NVEC) published on 30th July 2024 a report entitled "Toward the Arrangement of the Core Organization of Men's and Women's Co-Participation by the Functional Strengthening of the Independent Administrative Institute, National Women's Education Center", in which the responsible three, while stressing 'strengthening' in function and suggesting online trainings and the like as a shift from a building-centered to a function-centered approach, do state that they will 'start the related construction work promptly after the establishment of a new corporation in order to demolish the old and decaying buildings for accommodation, training, gymnastics, etc by the fiscal year 2030.

It has already been announced on NVEC's website that accommodation is no longer available after 1st April next year. Which means that NVEC's unique opportunities for face-to-face interaction and networking among women nationwide as well as accommodation and training will be lost. Facility closure is effectively a functional arrest.

Actually, facilities formerly constructed every part of the country under men's and women's co-participation policy have up to now been coerced to size down, regress or be closed down. NVEC's plan of accommodation and training building closure could set a precedent with reference to which to accelerate the trend.

No other place in Japan today can be found where diverse people such as women, sexual minorities and wheelchair drivers can learn and stay in peace. Further use for the evacuation and relief center after a disaster or in response to new women's support law should be envisioned in the future of NVEC. Female users have already expressed concern of losing a place to learn and stay safe and secure.

Another problem is that the serious issue of NVEC's demolishing and abolishing of accommodation and training buildings has not been made public and aware enough. Even scholars in gender and women studies or women's associations often say they have never heard of it. We are concerned about this plan steered without hearing many current and potential users.

We hereby make a request to the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Science and Technology, the National Women's Education Center that they should maintain successively and renew the accommodation and training buildings.

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