

Eiken P1 Speaking Exercise 2011-2

1. Agree or disagree: The Internet should be free from censorship.

I agree that the Internet should be free of censorship. There are three reasons why I believe this. First, the Internet has become a primary source information and communication for people all over the world. Just as we have a right to freedom of speech and information in our daily life, we should have the same freedoms on the Internet. Secondly, government censorship of the Internet can become a threat to the free speech of citizens. When we look at this issue globally, we see that the governments which censor the Internet the most are often the least democratic. This is not a coincidence. Dictators are afraid to allow their citizens access to uncensored information and communication. In fact, the Internet has played an important role in recent revolutions, including those of the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa. Finally, censorship on a large scale gives too much power to censors. They make decisions that should be left to individuals and families. Some people may think that censorship is important for moral or religious reasons, but censorship done by governments or other large organizations can be easily abused. It should be left up to users to make decisions about how the Internet should be.

2. Should countries have the right to possess chemical and biological weapons?

Countries should not have the right to possess chemical and biological weapons. I will give several reasons why these weapons should be banned. First, chemical and biological weapons are grouped together with nuclear weapons to make up weapons of mass destruction, or WMDs. WMDs are especially notorious because they kill large numbers of people without discrimination. They do not separate innocent civilians from enemy soldiers. Secondly, surviving victims of chemical and biological warfare suffer terribly from their injuries, just as survivors of nuclear war do. There are many stories about victims who have suffered throughout their lives from lung damage and other terrible injuries. Because of their power and the fear they cause, some of the worst dictatorships have used chemical and biological weapons against their own people. Finally, biological weapons are so dangerous that they can be a threat to the entire human race. Scientists working on biological weapons are creating viruses that could potentially spread around the world. If biological-weapons research increases, the possibility of an accidental release would also increase. But whether or not the release is accidental, the spread of the disease might become uncontrollable. For these reasons, biological and chemical weapons should be banned.

3. Are moral values on the decline in today's society?

I believe that moral values are declining today. There are many reasons why this is true, but I would like to focus on three. First, thanks to the media, people are exposed to negative influences at earlier and earlier ages. On TV, viewers of all ages see numerous acts of cruelty and violence. On the Internet, pornography and scenes of violence are easily accessed by anyone, including children. Moreover, many

young people have become so addicted to video games, web surfing and TV that they fail to develop themselves or consider their obligations to family and society. Secondly, many parents and teachers do not teach the importance of traditional values, such as showing respect to elders and honoring their family. Adults don't punish children for doing things they should not do, so children fail to learn to do what is right and become spoiled. Finally, most people have become too materialistic. They put their own materialistic needs ahead of more important things, such as moral or spiritual development. Despite the decline in moral values, I believe there is still hope for change. Recent disasters in Japan have caused people to rethink their priorities. The disaster show us the importance of basic values, such as helping those in need.

4. Has urbanization in Japan gone too far?

I don't feel that urbanization in Japan has gone too far. To explain why I believe this, I would first like to point out why urbanization is natural. Japan is a small country with a population of almost 130 million people. Nearly 75 percent of land area is mountainous, forcing people to live in limited areas, mostly coastal plains. But beyond just being a natural outcome in a crowded country, urbanization actually offers benefits. Many people desire to live in urban areas, where there are more opportunities for work, socializing, shopping and entertainment. Concerning employment, there are fewer work opportunities in rural areas. One of the reasons for this is that agriculture has become highly efficient, requiring fewer farmers. In addition, urbanization can actually help protect the environment. People consume less energy in high-rise apartment buildings than in individual homes, because apartments are smaller and keep their heat better. Also, building higher structures in urban cities is less damaging to the environment than building new structures in natural habitats. We should protect the few remaining wilderness areas that we now have. For these reasons, I believe that urbanization in Japan is actually a good thing for Japanese society.

5. Should the government prioritize domestic issues over international issues?

I believe that Japanese government needs to prioritize domestic issues over international issues at this time. The reasons for this are clear. First is the economy. Japan has been in recession for over a decade now. Many people can't find work or are underemployed. Many older people have lost a substantial amount of their retirement savings because of sharp drops in stock and real estate prices. With the increase in the number of elderly and the decrease in the number of young workers, we face even more serious economic concerns in the future. The second reason for focusing on domestic and nuclear disasters. Many Japanese have lost their homes and the means to support themselves. The government has been slow to meet even their basic needs. The third domestic concern is the government itself. Japan's leadership has been too weak to deal with many serious issues. For example, the frequent change of prime ministers has weakened executive leadership and has made the government, including an oversized bureaucracy, has become too high. These are the reasons why the Japanese government needs to focus more on domestic issues.