

**Twenty-Ninth Session of the Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women**

30 June – 18 July 2003

Introduction

by Dr. Mariko Bando

Director General, Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office of Japan

**On the Occasion of the Consideration of Japan's Fourth and Fifth
Periodic Reports**

**New York
8 July 2003**

Introduction

Madam Chairperson, honourable members of the Committee,

It is my great honour today to introduce Japan's fourth and fifth periodic reports on its implementation of the Convention at this twenty ninth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The delegation of Japan is composed today of representatives of several ministries and agencies, led by me, Director General of the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office. Many Japanese NGOs have flown in to attend this meeting; we welcome their interest and enthusiasm.

This is the third occasion for Japanese reports to be considered by this Committee, the last occasion being January 1994. The purpose of my presentation is to look back briefly over Japan's endeavours since then to fulfill its obligations under the Convention. Today, I would like to focus on the following four aspects:

- I. Machinery and posture of the Japanese Government;
- II. Legal and administrative measures taken;
- III. Targets set; and
- IV. International cooperation.

I. Machinery and posture of the Japanese Government

Japan streamlined its national government ministries and agencies in January 2001, reducing them in number from 23 to 13. **The Gender Equality Bureau** was established within the Cabinet Office and was given the mission of planning and coordinating the gender equality policies of the Government as a whole and thus strengthening existing systems. At the same time, **the Council for Gender Equality** was established as a new forum where ministers and intellectuals bring together their knowledge and experience to discuss important issues related to gender equality. The chairperson of the Council is **the Chief Cabinet Secretary**, who also holds the post of **Minister of State for Gender Equality**. The Council also serves to oversee the implementation of government policies and study their effects.

This strengthening of the national machinery enables policies to be implemented under the strong leadership of the Prime Minister's Cabinet. It is worth noting that, against this

current of downsizing government organizations as a whole, the office mandated to deal with gender issues was upgraded and placed at the centre of the administration.

II. Legal and administrative measures taken

Now I would like to report on the progress and effects of the new legal and other measures that have been taken. These include: 1) **the Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society**, 2) measures to combat violence against women, 3) measures to promote employment, and 4) balancing of work and family.

II-1. Basic Law

In June 1999, Japan enacted **the Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society**. Since then, several successive Cabinets have made a gender-equal society one of the highest priorities of the twenty-first century. The Law sets out basic principles for the formation of a gender-equal society, as well as the responsibilities of the national government, local governments, and citizens. In accordance with the Basic Law, **the Basic Plan for Gender Equality** was approved by the Cabinet in December 2000. The Basic Plan comprises long-term policies and principles targeting the year 2010, as well as concrete measures to be taken by 2005. The Plan also takes into account the results of **the Twenty-Third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly “Women 2000”**.

The creation of the Basic Law and the Basic Plan has made clear Japan's goals for and policies on gender equality. This marks a new stage in the history of the formation of a gender-equal society in Japan.

Furthermore, local governments are also making progress under **the Basic Law**. Each prefecture is already implementing its own plan for gender equality. As of June 2003, 42 of Japan's 47 prefectures have passed gender-equality ordinances.

II-2. Violence against women

In April 2001, Japan's Diet passed the nation's first comprehensive law dealing with spousal violence, **the Law for the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of**

Victims. In accordance with the law, 103 **Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Centers** have been established around Japan. They offer victims temporary shelter, and provide counseling for an average of 3,000 cases per month. All Centers are operated by prefectures and are financed with tax revenues. NGOs are also active in supporting victims of violence. The law further provides for two types of court protective order: **Orders to Prohibit Approach**, which prevent perpetrators from approaching victims, and **Orders to Vacate**, which force perpetrators to temporarily vacate dwellings they share with victims. Approximately 100 of these orders are issued each month, and they are providing women with powerful assistance against spousal violence.

In a nationwide survey of 4,500 women and men aged 20 and older conducted last November, one in five women reported having experienced physical violence, psychological abuse, or sexual coercion from a spouse. One in 20 reported having feared for her life. Since most such women never seek aid from a public institution, making the law and the availability of help common knowledge is a matter of urgency.

The Government therefore engages in broad-based efforts to publicize such information through the distribution of pamphlets, the creation of websites, the holding of symposia, and advertisements in mass media such as newspapers, television, and radio. In 2002, the Government created a symbol for the elimination of violence against women, and it is used in announcements and publicity.

In order to make the **Law for the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims** even more effective, revisions such as the broadening of protective orders to include former spouses and children and the extension of the period of Orders to Vacate from two weeks to one month are now being considered.

In addition to that legislation, **the Law for Punishing Acts Related to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and for Protecting Children** was enacted in May 1999, and **the Law on Proscribing Stalking Behavior and Assisting Victims** was enacted in May 2000. These laws have further strengthened measures responding to violence against women

II-3. Employment

The Equal Employment Opportunity Law, which was revised in 1997, prohibits discrimination against women during all stages of employment, from recruitment and hiring

to retirement. This law has led to a large decline in men-only or women-only recruiting and to a steady spread of equal treatment of men and women employees. However, looking at the percentage of women at the managerial level and the average earnings of men and women, gaps still persist. The issue now is how to eliminate them. The Government held **the Positive Action Promotion Council** in cooperation with employers' associations, which came up with a proposal in April 2002 stating the merit of fully exploring women's abilities. Similar organizations were also established in all 47 prefectures, and activities, including the nationwide diffusion of the proposal, are currently underway. As a result, opportunities for positive action at the local level are also increasing.

Regarding the wage and salary gaps between men and women, although they are steadily lessening, in 2002 the average female earned 66.5 percent of the average male. In November 2001, a study group was formed to directly address wage gap and to examine the causes and merits by which this gap can be closed.

Its report revealed that the primary causes of the gaps are the differing status of men and women on the job and the shorter length of service women work. Based on these findings, in April this year the Government announced guidelines for measures that labour and management, should take to improve the situation. Through the dissemination of these guidelines and further support for positive action by business corporations, the Government intends to eliminate the gaps in wages.

Regarding the issue of indirect discrimination, **a Panel on Equal Employment Opportunity Policies** is considering the question in an effort to build a consensus as to what constitutes indirect discrimination. Its report is expected in spring next year.

Another issue involving women and employment is part-time labor. 70 percent of all part-time workers are female. The number of part-time workers has increased remarkably during the past few years, passing 12 million in 2001, and 40 percent of employed women are part-time. Even though the number of part-time workers who have taken on some of the core functions formerly carried out by full-time employees is increasing, wages for women working part-time are only about 70 percent of those working full-time. A council comprising members representing the labour, the management, and the public interest examined this issue and reported on the results in March. On that basis, the Government of Japan is preparing to revise current guidelines that demonstrate the idea of equitable treatment of full-time and part-time employees.

II-4. Balancing of work and family

In 2001 **the Childcare and Family Care Leave Law** was revised to prohibit the disadvantageous treatment of employees because of their taking childcare leave, among other things. Under the leadership of **Prime Minister Koizumi**, in July 2001 the Cabinet decided on policies to support the balancing of work and family. They include increasing the capacity of daycare by 50,000 per year for three years beginning in 2002, for a total increase of 150,000, and five days' leave for men when their children are born. The goal of a 50,000 person increase in childcare capacity was met in 2002.

According to a 2001 survey, two out of three women left work upon the birth of a child. Underlying this situation are factors such as a general atmosphere not favourable to taking childcare leave, inflexible working management, long waiting lists for childcare facilities, particularly in urban areas, and the tendency of fathers not being able to participate in childcare. The burden of childcare falls primarily on women, and the view that a mother is best suited to raise her children is deeply rooted.

The burden of balancing work and family is considered an important factor behind Japan's rapidly advancing trend towards families with fewer children. In **the Immediate Action Plan to Support the Development of the Next Generation**, the Government has set goals of raising the figure for men who take child-care leave from less than 1 percent to 10 percent, and for women who take child-care leave from 58 percent to 80 percent. In accordance with that policy, it is scheduled that the Diet passes **the Law for Measures to Support the Development of the Next Generation** tonight, which obligates local governments and corporations to create plans of action and carry out intensive, planned measures over a ten-year period.

The growing number of single-mother families created by the rapid increase in divorces has led to a need for measures to promote self-reliance in such families. Last year, **the Law for the Welfare of Fatherless Families and Widows** was revised, expanding measures related to child-rearing, employment, economic support, and educational expenses.

III. Targets Set

The Government of Japan identifies in some areas room for improvement in the elimination of discrimination against women. The Government aims to have more women in policy-making, and also to fight against stereotyped perceptions.

III-1. More women in policy-making

The 2002 Human Development Report produced by the United Nations Development Program ranks Japan thirty-second out of 66 countries in the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), which demonstrates that Japanese women are not fully utilizing their great potential

The Government considers that it should lead the way in expanding the participation of women in policy decision-making processes. In May 2001, guidelines for the enlargement of recruitment and promotion of female national public officers, including goals and concrete measures to be taken through 2005, were formulated and are being implemented. Furthermore, the goal set in 1996 of having female members comprise 20 percent of national councils that advise on government policy-making was met in 2000, and a new goal of 30 percent has been set. As of September 2002, 25 percent of national council members were women.

The number of women in leadership positions in different sectors of society, however, remains low. In Government and the private sector, for example, women hold only 8.9 percent of management posts. In accordance with Prime Minister Koizumi's instructions, the Council for Gender Equality identified three major areas and offered recommendations for concrete measures to be taken. The three areas are: the participation of women in policy decision-making processes; the participation of women as technicians, engineers, scientists, and entrepreneurs, fields in which they are underrepresented; and enabling women to return to work after going on leave for childbirth and childcare.

A particularly important point is that a recommendation that women would hold at least 30 percent of leadership positions in all sectors of society by 2020 is expressed as a numerical goal. The figure itself may not be impressive, but the setting of an actual numerical goal for all sectors of society is unprecedented. It is expected to have a significant effect on boosting the participation of women.

A lack of information regarding expertise and capital and an absence of female role models are obstacles to women taking on new challenges. The Government is aiming at establishing information networking in collaboration with business, universities, research institutions, and NGOs, by March 2004.

III-2. Fight against stereotyped perceptions

Changing people's stereotyped perceptions of gender roles is vital if measures supporting the balancing of work and family are to be successful. Working with local governments and women's groups, the Government is implementing a variety of carefully worked out educational activities and provides information through magazines and websites. A gradual but genuine change in people's views is apparent. For example, in a 1997 survey, 57.8 percent agreed and 37.8 percent disagreed with the view that "Husbands should work outside the home and wives should stay at home." In a 2002 survey, the number disagreeing increased by 10 percentage points, with 47.0 percent of those responding disagreeing and the same percentage agreeing.

In March 2003, the Government created a manual for government publications free from stereotyped gender-role images. It has been distributed to national government ministries and agencies, local governments, and courts, and has been made available to the public on the Internet.

A specialist committee of the Council for Gender Equality examined tax, social security, and employment systems from the perspective of how they influence women's lifestyle choices. Last December, the committee proposed an opinion to ensure that the influence of such systems and practices on women's choice would be rendered as neutral as possible, and that was reflected in tax system reforms.

People's awareness and ways of thinking cannot be changed in a day. However, the Government will continue working to correct stereotyped views of gender roles through education, publicity, and consciousness-raising activities and through reviews of systems and programs from the perspective of gender equality.

IV. International cooperation

Japan, the largest donor of ODA over the last decade of the 20th century, has been active in supporting women in the developing world both bilaterally and through the United Nations and other international organizations. International cooperation is also vital in the fight against trafficking.

IV-1. Supporting women in the developing world

Under Japan's **Initiative on WID, Women In Development**, announced in 1995, Japanese ODA has been focusing on women in education, health, and their participation in economic and social activities. Projects specifically targeted for gender have annually marked around 10 percent of Japanese ODA which has averaged around \$10 billion per annum over the past decade. In particular, as regards Japan's grassroots grand aid (small-scale projects under ten million yen, identified by embassies and carried out by local governments, medical institutes, or NGOs), 451 out of 1731 projects focused on gender in fiscal year 2001.

Japan's development cooperation extends not only in Asia but spreads to all parts of the world. In Guatemala, the gap between boys and girls going to primary school was brought down from 6.6 percent in 1996 to 3.8 percent in 2001. Japan assists Afghan women through building hospitals for mothers and children, training female teachers in Japanese universities, and in collaboration with UNIFEM for their advancement through **the Trust Fund for Human Security**. A seminar to specifically address the FGM is being planned by the Governments of Sudan and Japan in collaboration with UNICEF, as well as NGOs.

Japan's ODA Charter, approved by the Cabinet in 1992 to indicate the Government's basic policies with regard to the implementation of ODA, is now undergoing a review. In the revised Charter, whose draft to be presented to the public for comments tomorrow in Japan, gender perspective will be reinforced as the important element among the basic policies on ODA.

In the Japanese Diet, **the Parliamentary League for Women and Development** was formed in 2002. Members of both Houses and of parties in power and in opposition are actively participating in the League.

IV-2. Trafficking

The Government recognizes the problem of trafficking in persons as being of particular seriousness. The issue has been included in Japan's periodic reports beginning with the fourth, taking into account the Committee's concluding comments at the previous consideration. In 2002, 16 cases of trafficking in persons as part of crimes involving public indecency, prostitution, and employment of foreign nationals were uncovered. 28 brokers and others were arrested, while it was confirmed that 55 foreign women were involved. The Government is exchanging information with relevant authorities and embassies of countries of origin in order to prevent trafficking and protect victims.

Furthermore, Japan supports projects for the prevention of trafficking in persons and assisting victims in Southeast Asian countries such as Cambodia and Vietnam through **the Trust Fund for Human Security**. In cooperation with UNICEF and international NGO groups, the Government of Japan held **the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children** in December 2001. This February to followed up the Congress, the Government organized **the International Symposium on Trafficking of Children** in Tokyo in conjunction with UNICEF, with the participation of Southeast Asian and Japanese NGOs, which discussed possible modalities of collaboration between NGOs and governments.

In conjunction with **the United Nations Center for International Crime Prevention** and **the United Nations Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFEI)**, for which Japan provides all operating funds, an international seminar was held in August 2002 to promote ratification of **the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime**. Japan signed this important convention in December 2000 and its supplementing protocols last December 9. The Ratification of the Convention was approved by the Diet this past May.

Conclusion

The Government of Japan would like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation for the important role the Committee plays in advancing the status of women all over the

world, and its gratitude and respect to the members of the Committee for their hard work. The National Diet accepted amendments to Article 20, paragraph 1 of **the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**, and the instrument of acceptance was deposited on June 12.

I would also like to emphasize that, in the process of preparing Japan's reports, information- and opinion-sharing with NGOs took place, as was suggested by the Committee in its concluding comments at the previous session. In particular, during the preparation of the fifth report, a series of four meetings was held to garner information from civil society. The information and opinions obtained through those meetings were considered important reference points during the preparation of the report and implementation of government measures. The Government greatly values the role of NGOs in promoting a gender-equal society, and it will continue working to strengthen its partnership with them.

As a State Party to this Convention, Japan will continue striving to build a rich and vital gender-equal society where all discrimination between men and women has been eliminated and where the human rights of men and women are respected.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt hope that today's dialogue will further contribute to building such a gender-equal society in Japan.

Thank you very much.