

**Response to the Questionnaire to Governments on
Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995)
and
the Outcome of the Twenty-Third
Special Session of the General Assembly (2000)**

JAPAN

Part 1: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

1. Establishment of a framework for promoting gender equality

The Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society was promulgated in June 1999. This law sets out some basic principles for the formation of a gender-equal society, as well as the responsibilities of the state, local governments and citizens. The Basic Plan for Gender Equality was formulated in December 2000, based upon this law. The Basic Plan describes the direction of long-term policies up to the year 2010, and the concrete measures to be implemented by the end of fiscal 2005. The Basic Plan also takes into account the outcome of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly "Women 2000."

As a result of the administrative reform of the central government in January 2001, the Council for Gender Equality was established. This body has taken over and expanded the functions of its predecessor organization bearing the same name, the former Council for Gender Equality. The new Council was given a mandate to monitor the implementation status of government policies and to study and deliberate on the impact of government policies on the formation of a gender-equal society. Compared to the former Council, which was composed solely of intellectuals, the new Council is chaired by the Chief Cabinet Secretary, who is also the Minister for Gender Equality, and includes cabinet ministers responsible for implementing gender equality policies so that the involvement of related ministries is strengthened. In addition, the Gender Equality Bureau was established within the Cabinet Office; it has responsibility for the planning and overall coordination of gender equality policies to be implemented by the government as a whole.

A framework for promoting gender equality has been steadily established over the past few years, and the government is currently making a concerted effort to promote policies towards the formation of a gender-equal society.

2. Strengthening of measures aimed at curbing violence against women

The Law for the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims, the first comprehensive law to address the issue of spousal violence, was promulgated in April 2001. Based on this law, prefectural authorities have established Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Centers in 103 locations nationwide. These centers provide temporary shelter for victims and provide counseling for approximately 3,300 cases per month. In accordance with this law, the Orders to Prohibit Approach, which prevent spouses from approaching their victims, and/or Orders to Vacate, which force spouses to temporarily vacate domiciles they share, are issued by courts at a pace of more than 100 cases per month. These new edicts providing much-needed help to women who suffer from spousal violence.

In addition to that legislation, the Law for Punishing Acts related to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and for Protection of Children was enacted in May 1999, and the Law on Proscribing Stalking Behavior and Assisting Victims and the Law to Prevent Child Abuse were enacted in May 2000. These laws have further strengthened measures aimed at stopping violence against women.

Japan has been addressing the issue of trafficking in persons in recent years. In addition to cracking down on this type of activity by the strict application of related laws, the government has been endeavoring to strengthen collaboration, including information exchange among related ministries and agencies, NGOs and embassies in Tokyo with regard to victims of trafficking in persons and engaging in discussions aimed at gaining a more accurate grasp of the situation surrounding trafficking.

Japan signed the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in November 2000 and its supplementary protocol in December 2002. The ratification of the Convention was approved by the Diet in May 2003. Discussions on ratification of the supplementary protocol are currently underway. Moreover, Japan actively contributes to international measures to fight against trafficking by providing funds to international institutions and by engaging in international cooperation, including inter-regional cooperation.

3. Promotion of measures to secure equal employment opportunities

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. Efforts to enforce this law have led to a large decline in recruitment according to sex and to a steady spread of systemic equal treatment of male and female employees.

In order to dissolve the existing gap, the government, through the Positive Action Promotion Council, which was established in collaboration with employers' association, is focusing on promoting positive action by encouraging independent measures adopted by private enterprises, implementing benchmark projects, which help a companies to measure their status on advancement of positive actions.

The wage gap between men and women is still large by international standard: the women's index stood at 66.5 (compared to 100 for men) in fiscal 2002. As a result of analysis of the factors involved and deliberation on measures to reduce the gap, it was concluded in November 2002, that the primary causes of the gaps are the differences in the class of position and the length of service between men and women. Based on these findings, the government has prepared a guideline for labor and management to voluntarily work on dissolving the wage disparity between men and women, and is currently making efforts toward their widespread promotion.

Moreover, the government set up a panel of intellectuals in fiscal 2002 to deliberate matters such as effective measures to promote positive actions and definitions on what constitutes indirect discrimination. Following considerable deliberation, the panel is scheduled to compile a report sometime in the spring of 2004.

4. Support for the harmonization of work and family

The Law on Child Care and Nursing Care Leave was amended in 2001 to establish a system to restrict overtime work by employees engaged in child care or nursing care, and to prohibit disadvantageous treatment of employees who take child care leave. In July 2001, the Policy on Support Measures for the Balancing of Work and Child Raising was adopted by cabinet decision under the initiative of Prime Minister Koizumi. This policy incorporated targets such as "Strategy for no children waiting for a day-care center", and a targeted increase of 50,000 children by day care facilities was achieved in fiscal 2002.

The Immediate Action Plan to Support the Development of the Next Generation was adopted in 2003. It stipulates that the state, local governments and enterprises make concerted efforts to comprehensively and systematically promote measures such as reconsideration of working habits, including those of men, such as a reduction in the amount of overtime work, and setting numerical targets for the amount of child care leave to be taken. Furthermore, the Law for Measures to Support the Development of the Next Generation was enacted. This law requires local governments, large

enterprises, and the state and local government institutions to formulate action plans to promote intensive and systematic measures to be taken over a 10- year period.

5. Expansion of women's participation in policy-decision making processes

Efforts are being made to expand women's participation in policy decision-making processes. However given that this remains insufficient, the government is working to expand the recruitment and promotion of female national government officers; it published a formulation of guidelines in May 2001 and is setting targets and concrete measures for up to fiscal 2005. With regard to the number of women in national advisory councils and committees, when the 20% target determined in 1996 was achieved in 2000, a target of 30% to be achieved by the end of fiscal 2005 was determined. Steady progress is being made; as of September 2003, the figure was 26.8% .

In April 2003, a recommendation that women hold at least 30 percent of leadership positions in all sectors of society by the year 2020 is expressed. In addition to taking the initiative by expanding the recruitment and promotion of female national government officers, the government is encouraging the promotion of women in private enterprises. The government also conducts deliberations on the establishment of an information network to provide women with more diverse opportunities.

Part 2: Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

A Women and poverty

(1) Enhancement of support for single-mother households

Whereas a child raising allowance has long been provided as support for single-mother households, from April 2003, measures to support their independence include: i) support measures for child raising and daily life such as short-term support programs for child raising and support programs for daily life; ii) employment support measures such as employment counseling for mothers in single-mother households and financial aid for taking courses for the purpose of skill development; iii) measures to secure expenses for rearing children; and iv) payment of a child raising allowance and financial support measures such as loans from welfare funds for widows with children. These measures have been developed by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in a comprehensive manner based on the amended Mother, Child and Widow's Welfare Law. Moreover, further employment support measures are being taken based on the Special Measures Law to Support the Employment of Mothers in Fatherless Families enacted in July 2003, and enforced in August the same year.

B Education and training of women

(1) Promotion of gender equality education in elementary and secondary education

Throughout school education, Japan promotes the enhancement of guidance, consideration in textbook and teaching materials, and enhancement of training for educators with respect to human rights, gender equality, and mutual understanding and cooperation between men and women.

The Courses of Study that have been gradually implemented since fiscal 2002 endeavor to enhance guidance on the equality of men and women at work and in social participation, and on the importance of both men and women cooperating to build families in which they both fulfill roles as individual members of the family in civics and home

economics lessons, in addition to the existing guidance.

(2) Promotion of gender equality in institutes of higher education

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) informs universities and research institutions of the report on support for female researchers compiled by the ‘Conference to Support Diversification of Careers for Women’ in March 2003 and the proposal compiled by the Committee on Human Resources of Council for Science and Technology in June 2003 to promote female researchers’ participation and to enable them to exercise their talents in viewpoints on the fostering and securing of researchers, and is encouraging these institutions to make independent efforts.

Moreover, in an effort to support women researchers by making the operation of research grants more flexible, MEXT has accepted applications for Grants-in-Aid for Academic Research submitted solely using their maiden/commonly called names since 2001, and has permitted resumption of interrupted research following a one-year period of child care leave from fiscal 2003. As of July 2003, interruptions and extensions of fellowships sponsored by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science due to childbirth and child raising have begun to be permitted at the request of a young researcher.

The National Women’s Education Center (an independent administrative institution) has studied the situation in terms of courses related to women’s studies offered at institutions of higher education, has compiled a database and made it publicly accessible, and is popularizing the results of this study.

(3) Promotion of social education

In addition to enhancing learning that supports women’s social participation, the government strives to foster gender-equal perceptions in men and women and support men’s participation both at work and in family life and community activities, and implements study programs in each prefecture that promote gender equality in family and community activities.

(4) Activities of the National Women’s Education Center

The National Women’s Education Center endeavors to collaborate with facilities and institutions involved in women’s education both in Japan and overseas. It provides training for leaders and others involved in women’s education and opportunities for exchange among women’s organizations. It also conducts specialized research, and collects and provides information on women’s and family education.

In particular, as a national center for women’s education, it conducts international comparative studies between Japan and other countries, and endeavors to popularize the results of these studies at symposia and so forth.

(5) Enhancement of academic and career guidance

In addition to providing organized and systematic academic guidance in junior and senior high schools, in order to foster in students the ability and attitude that enables them to think about their own lives and to take responsibility for choosing and deciding the courses on their own volition without gender bias, MEXT promotes career education that fosters favorable views of work and employment in each and every student.

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare endeavors to enlighten female students and enable them to make appropriate career choices by holding enlightenment seminars and by distributing guidebooks on job hunting.

C Women and health

(1) Support for women’s life-long health

To support women's life-long health, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) implements health education, counseling and guidance related to women's health, and counseling and guidance for couples concerned about infertility. Moreover, regarding pregnancy and childbirth, in addition to providing consistent basic health services for mother and child at the local municipal offices, that start from notification of pregnancy through admission to elementary school, MHLW is establishing a perinatal medical care network around a core of general perinatal medical centers with the purpose of providing appropriate medical care to high-risk expectant mothers and new-borns.

MHLW also conducts courses on methods of breast self-examinations for prefectural and municipal public nurses who are encouraged to become leaders in the campaign to popularize breast self-exams.

(2) Promotion of measures against HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases

Trends in the outbreak of HIV carriers/AIDS patients and patients infected with sexually transmitted diseases in Japan continue to demand attention. Japan enacted the Law on Infectious Diseases in 1998, and has been promoting various measures to popularize accurate knowledge on the prevention of infectious diseases, including the appropriate use of condoms, in line with the "Guidelines on the Prevention of Specific Infectious Diseases related to AIDS" and the "Guidelines on the Prevention of Specific Infectious Diseases related to Sexually Transmitted Diseases" which were formulated in accordance with this law.

Not only do the newly adopted Courses of Study clearly stipulate that AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases be addressed in school education, the Ministry of Education is also endeavoring to enhance AIDS education by compiling and distributing teaching materials for elementary and junior and senior high school students and guidance materials for educators, providing training for school personnel, and so forth.

D Violence against women

(1) Promulgation of the Law for the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims and its implementation status

As mentioned above in section 2 of Part 1, the Law for the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims, which provides for comprehensive regulations on the issue of spousal violence, was enforced in October 2001 (some articles were enforced in April 2002), and related ministries and agencies are making a concerted effort to implement this law smoothly.

The Cabinet Office has been implementing various types of public information and enlightenment activities, including the promotion of the Campaign for Eliminating Violence against Women advocated by the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality. In addition to conducting its Survey on Domestic Violence (FY2002) to grasp the actual situation concerning victims, the Cabinet Office has been conducting training for staff at Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Centers, and providing information through its website and so forth.

The National Police Agency has been endeavoring to respond to cases of spousal violence with measures appropriate to the character of spousal violence. The victim's wishes are considered when making arrests or taking other measures in cases that violate penal ordinances, and in cases in which penal ordinances have not been violated, victims are instructed in appropriate self-defense and countermeasures, and perpetrators are provided with guidance and warnings when this is recognized as necessary. With regard to cases in which protection orders (provided in the Law to Prevent Spousal Violence) have been issued, the National Police agency notifies related police officer of information pertinent to protection orders, and instructs victims on points to consider with respect to crime prevention and matters concerning the use of

spousal violence counseling and support centers. The police have been arresting suspects and strictly dealing with cases in which violation of a protection order has been recognized.

The prosecution has always endeavored to consider the characteristics of each case of spousal violence that becomes a criminal case after carrying out necessary criminal investigations in collaboration with the police, and to deal with them appropriately. Moreover, having identified spousal violence as a serious infringement of human rights, the Human Rights Organs of the Ministry of Justice are striving to enhance the counseling system through use of a special telephone counseling service called “Women’s Human Rights Hotline” (Refer to I (2)), and have been actively engaging in awareness-raising activities to prevent spousal violence. Additionally, in line with enactment of the Law to Prevent Spousal Violence, the public prosecutors offices endeavors to deal with criminal cases involving violations of protection order appropriately, and related departments in the Ministry of Justice have been striving to enhance the training of related personnel.

Women’s counseling centers established in each prefecture, which comprise hubs for women’s protection services, have functioned as spousal violence counseling and support centers since April 2002, providing female victims with counseling guidance, and temporary protection when the need arises. In an effort to enhance and strengthen support for female victims, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has implemented a system for commissioning temporary protection to mother and child livelihood support facilities, private shelters and so forth; strengthened the structure of counseling services provided at night and on holidays at women’s counseling centers; implemented professional training for staff at women’s counseling centers; appointed staff in charge of psychotherapy at women’s counseling centers to deal with female victims’ mental health care; and appointed advisors to look after accompanying infants as a means of supporting measures to foster the independence of protected female victims accompanied by infants.

This law contains a provision that stipulates deliberations be held on reviewing the law three years after enactment, should this be necessary. Hence, the Diet is currently engaging in deliberations on reviewing the law, including expansion of the targeted people for protection orders, considering the implementation status of this law.

(2) Promotion of measures to counter prostitution

1) Prevention of diversifying prostitution

The Law on Control and Improvement of Amusement Business (hereinafter referred to as the “Amusement Business Control Law”) was amended in June 2001. Given that telephone dating services comprised a hotbed for child prostitution, the main amendment made is that business operators are now obliged to confirm that their customers are 18 years of age or older.

Moreover, matters regarding these businesses that were heretofore regulated by prefectural ordinances are now regulated uniformly by the Entertainment and Amusement Trades Control Law. In concrete terms, the Law obliges businesses to register with prefectural public safety commissions, establishes areas in which they are prohibited from operating, implements regulations to limit advertising, and provides instructions and regulations for suspending business at the direction of prefectural public safety commissions.

2) Measures to counter trafficking

In Japan, acts that involve trafficking are penalized appropriately by applying aspects of the entire legal system, including criminal law, laws and regulations on worker protection, the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, the Anti-prostitution Law, and the Child Welfare Law.

In addition to strengthening its approach to trafficking crimes, the police have been distributing a public information

and enlightenment video produced by the National Police Agency to related institutions in Japan and overseas, to make the real situation on trafficking and measures to deal with it in Japan, widely known.

Japan signed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, on 9 December 2002, and is currently engaging in deliberations towards its ratification. In addition to actively participating in the Bali Process, which is a regional-level measure, and contributing to promote regional cooperation to prevent trafficking in persons in the Asia Pacific Region, Japan has been making contributions such as hosting an international symposium on trafficking in children, and supporting various projects of international organizations to fight against trafficking in persons.

On 5th April 2004, the Coordination Mechanism on Trafficking in Persons, an inter-agency task force, headed by Assistant Cabinet Secretaries, with Director Generals of relevant Ministries as members was set up at Kantei, the Prime Minister's Office.

(3) Enhancement of relief measures, counseling and protection for female victims

In May 2000, Japan established legislation to protect the victims of crimes. This legislation, abolished the time limit for taking legal proceedings for sexual crimes, and introduced examining witnesses with the use of video-links technology and other measures to protect witnesses.

The police have been endeavoring to establish a counseling system for female victims and to create an environment conducive to having female victims seek counseling by renting counseling space appropriate for female victims in non-police facilities and establishing "sexual crime counseling offices" staffed by female police officers.

The National Police Agency and the Public Prosecutor's Office endeavor to alleviate victims' psychological burden by using the victim contact and notification system to provide them with information on the outcome of punishment and the release of the assailant from prison. Each district prosecutor's office appoints victim support staff to counsel victims, accompanies them to court, and, when the need arises, introduces them to victim support institutions that provide counseling.

The Human Rights Organs of the Ministry of Justice actively tries to discover cases of violence against women and provide relief to female victims through a special telephone counseling service called "Women's Human Rights Hotline" (refer to I (2)). When a female victim seeks counseling or reports injuries through the service, the Human Rights Organ concerned, depending on the case, contacts and files a formal complaint at criminal investigative institutions and other related institutions. The Human Rights Organ conducts its own investigation on the case as a serious violation of the woman's human rights. Female victims are aided through various measures such as provision of support for female victims, and instructions and advice to the perpetrator and other persons concerned, and efforts are made to prevent the reoccurrence of violence against women by educating the people involved on the principle of human rights.

(4) Prevention of sexual harassment

In addition to endeavoring towards making thorough use of the guidelines based on the Equal Employment Opportunities Law to build effective measures to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare makes a prompt and appropriate response to a sexual harassment case, once it has occurred. Besides accepting consultations from female workers, the government appoints counselors with specialized knowledge to enhance counseling for those who suffer from severe mental anguish. Moreover, information on ways of dealing with this issue are provided by holding practical training for business owners and staff responsible for personnel affairs to provide them with concrete know-how.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology formulated “regulations on the prevention of sexual harassment within MEXT” and urges universities and other institutions of higher education to adopt preventative measures. These institutions, based on the regulations, are taking measures such as the establishment of counseling offices and organs to conduct surveys and formulate countermeasures, and the implementation of enlightenment activities for their staff, and so forth.

(5) The issue known as wartime comfort women

With regard to the issue known as wartime comfort women, the government acknowledges that the honor and dignity of a large number of women were severely injured, and expressed its sincere feelings of apology and remorse on various occasions. Although the issues concerning property and other claims were resolved by the San Francisco Peace Treaty and other relevant treaties and international agreements, the government concluded that measures through the Asian Women’s Fund (AWF) are the best and the most appropriate, and has been providing all possible assistance for the AWF. The government is determined to continue its utmost efforts to seek understanding from people, governments, authorities and other parties of the countries and regions concerning with regard to Japanese citizens’ sincere feelings towards this issue, which have been manifested by the activities of AWF.

E Women and armed conflict

(1) Contributions to international organizations that promote peace

Given that many of those who most need support at times of conflict are women and children, Japan cooperates on a continual basis with international organizations involved in humanitarian aid such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and attaches importance to Human Security perspectives while doing so. Moreover, Japan has been supporting a UNIFEM project in Afghanistan through the Trust Fund for Human Security established by Japan within the United Nations in order to promote the social re-integration of female refugees and internally-displaced persons.

(2) Advisory Council on Assistance to Women in Afghanistan

The Advisory Council on Assistance to Women in Afghanistan has been convened by the Chief Cabinet Secretary since February 2002 to discuss the best ways of addressing women’s needs when supporting post-conflict reconstruction to Afghanistan. The Council addressed the importance of incorporating women’s/gender perspectives into all issues of aid and compiled a proposal setting out the direction of measures to be taken in six priority areas of aid. Aid activities based on this proposal are being carried out.

F Women and the economy

(1) Securing equal opportunities and treatment for men and women in the field of employment

The Amended Equal Employment Opportunities Law has been in force since April 1999. By systematically visiting companies, the government investigates the actual situation of companies’ employment management systems and how they are operated and administrative guidance will be provided when cases that violate the law are identified. Directors of prefectural labor bureaus endeavor to resolve individual disputes between female workers and employers smoothly and swiftly by providing counsel, guidance, warnings, and mediation through their respective equal opportunity mediation conference.

In order to promote positive action, the Positive Action Promotion Council, comprised of company executives and

intellectuals, was established in collaboration with employer's associations in fiscal 2001. A proposal was compiled in April 2002 following deliberation on measures to popularize positive action in employment. Moreover, from fiscal 2003, the Council has been endeavoring to promote positive action by implementing a benchmark project that helps a company to measure its working environment for female workers by comparing it with that of other companies in the same industry.

A committee established to study the issue of wage gap between men and women compiled a report in November 2002. Upon receiving this report, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare compiled a guideline in April 2003 to help labor and management work together voluntarily to resolve the wage gap between men and women, and is currently endeavoring to make the guideline widely known and accepted.

The Panel on Equal Employment Opportunity Policies is currently deliberating on what constitutes indirect discrimination and measures for promoting positive action.

(2) Promotion of measures for part-time workers

With regard to measures for part-time workers, the guidelines based on the Law on Part-time Workers were revised in August 2003. The amendment clearly stipulates standard procedures to categorize and to give fair treatment to part-time workers by determining their actual situation in terms of difference of duties/ways of personnel management between full-time workers. It also added that new measures to be taken by employers for improving their employment management based on the procedures, such as the establishment of conditions of changing from part-time workers to permanent full-time workers, and the implementation of measures to encourage labour dialogues.

(3) Support for female entrepreneurs

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has been implementing support programs for female entrepreneurs at the Center for the Advancement of Working Women (established in 2000), such as seminars that incorporate exchange among female entrepreneurs and individual counseling.

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) provides support to female entrepreneurs by creating a credit line with tax privileges and exemption of collateral fees through the National Life Finance Cooperation and the Japan Finance Cooperation for Small Businesses. During the approximately four years and nine months since the inauguration of this credit line, the total amount of credit exceeds 70 billion yen from 13,000 loans. METI has also been providing training courses for female entrepreneurs. Within the courses for people on the certain stage of setting up a business, which enable them to complete a business plan and acquire the practical skills in approximately 10 days (30 hours), through subsidies to the Central Federation of Societies of Commerce and Industry, and the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

(4) Support for women to perform at full strength their capacity

To enable women to participate actively in a variety of activities in accordance with their aspirations and capacities, the Cabinet Office has forged ahead to establish an efficient easy-to-get information system that provides women with information necessary for "challenge" (Refer to Part 4 for details).

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has been supporting women who have retired from work to raise their children, and who wish to return to work, by providing them with the information necessary to help them find jobs. In 2004, MHLW will offer more conscientious support through individual counseling, etc. (for more about positive actions, refer to F (1)).

(5) Support for the balancing of work and family and community life

1) Support for the balancing of work and child/nursing care

To alleviate the burden of balancing work and family life, the Law on Child Care and Nursing Care Leave was partially amended to establish a system to restrict overtime work of employees engaged in child care or nursing care, and enacted in April 2002. The government has been promoting measures to encourage citizens to take child care leave by setting numerical target-goals for taking child care leave (10% for men, 80% for women), and so forth. Moreover, a bill aimed at amending the Law on Child Care and Nursing Care Leave partially, for establishment a system for taking leave to nurse children, has been submitted to the Diet in an ordinary session in 2004.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has been endeavoring to enhance a counseling system for parents worried about child raising and home discipline, by offering subsidies to municipalities that employ “parenting supporters”, who are experienced in raising children and provide them with counseling and advice in a relaxed atmosphere.

2) Support measures for fostering the next generation

Because Japan’s birthrate is declining rapidly, the government has been promoting the general and planned measures decided in March 2003, titled “Interim Measures of Support for Fostering the Next Generation”, which are in line with the four pillars of: “Reconsideration of lifecycles of men and women”, “Support for child raising in communities”, “Support for the next generation in Social Security System” and “Encouraging children to become more sociable and independent”. These measures are considered the next step after the Cabinet’s decision “the Policy on Support Measures for the Harmonization of Work and Child Raising”, which includes strategy for no children waiting for a day-care center, etc., adopted in July 2001. Upon these measures the Law on the Promotion of Measures to Support Fostering of the Next Generation was promulgated in July 2003. Based upon this law, local governments, large enterprises, and the state and local government institutions were obliged to formulate action plans for measures to support the fostering of the next generation. So these parties concerned act in one body to advance support for fostering the next generation.

Moreover, necessary amendments to the Law on Child Allowances, the Child Welfare Law and the Law on Child Care and Nursing Care Leave are being submitted to the Diet in 2004 as three bills related to measures to support the fostering of the next generation.

(6) Promotion of women’s participation in business management in rural areas

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has been comprehensively promoting the improvement of the environment in which women in rural areas can participate in business management. This includes support for pension premiums to spouses who conclude family management agreements with certified farmers under the Farmers’ Pension Funds, establishment of an interest-free credit facility that gives priority to female entrepreneurs, establishment of comprehensive facilities for providing daycare for infants, research and development of local products, providing various kinds of training programs for female farmers, and support for the groups of fisherwomen etc. endeavoring to set up in business in the processing and sale of fisheries products.

G Women in power and decision-making

(1) Expansion of women’s participation in policy decision-making processes

Considering the international target that women account for 30% of leading positions in all parts of the societies stipulated in the United Nations’ Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and international circumstances, the Council for Gender Equality and the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality decided, in

April and June 2003 respectively, to promote "Measures to Support Women's Challenges" aimed at encouraging independent efforts by setting numerical targets and deadlines in all fields in the hope that women will account for at least 30% of leading positions by the year 2020.

Although women's participation in policy decision-making processes in Japan lags by international standards, some measures, such as promoting women's participation in the national advisory councils and committees as mentioned in Part 1, have achieved a certain level of success. Building on these experiences, in addition to taking the initiative to promote measures to encourage women's participation in policy decision-making processes, the government has been requesting the cooperation of local governments, companies, and all types of organizations, and supporting their efforts.

1) Promotion of the recruitment and promotion of female national government officials

At the end of 2001, each ministry formulated an action plan to enlarge the recruitment and promotion of female officers that stipulated targets to be achieved by the end of fiscal 2005 and concrete measures for achieving them, and has been steadily promoting measures towards this goal. As a result, for example, 19.3% of those promised employment by successfully passing the Level I exam in fiscal 2004 were women, a rise of 4.2 points over three years, and is on an upward trend. Nevertheless, the percentage of women in management positions remains low. The problem is one of pace: the speed to improve the current system, based on the predominance of seniority-based factors, assuming equal treatment, and the principle of merit, is extremely low.

Given these circumstances, in 2003, the Chief Cabinet Secretary requested all ministers to display their own leadership in making further efforts toward the continued expansion of the appointment and promotion of female national government officers.

2) Promotion of women's participation in international organizations

Women's representation among Japanese professional staff in the Secretariat of the United Nations is gradually rising, from 54.8% at the end of June 1997, to 58.0% at the end of June 2003.

The number of female Japanese professional staff in the United Nations and other major international organizations had risen significantly, from 271 in 1997 to 362 by 2003. Of these, those who are currently engaged in executive positions are the Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Deputy Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). More Japanese women are expected to work for international organizations in the future.

I Human rights of women

(1) Dissemination of conventions and related documents

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; Periodic Reports on the Implementation of Convention; the Concluding Observations of the Committees; other documents related to the convention, and documents related to the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (Women 2000) and other meetings concerned with advancement of the status of women, are disseminated by maintaining websites, by publishing public relations magazines and by holding meetings, so that the contents of these documents becomes widely known.

(2) Strengthening and enhancing counseling systems

The Human Rights Organs of the Ministry of Justice have established a special telephone counseling service, the Women's Human Rights Hotline, in national and regional legal affairs bureaus since July 2000, and have established a

system through which they can accept in a professional manner consultations on a variety of issues pertaining to women's human rights such as spousal violence, sexual harassment in the workplace and acts of stalking. The Women's Human Rights Hotline is mainly staffed by female Human Rights Volunteers and female officers from legal affairs bureaus who endeavor to create a system that makes it easier for women to consult them. In addition to Human Rights Offices permanently settled within national and regional legal affairs bureaus and their branch offices, which remain open at all times, special human rights offices, which are opened temporarily in municipal offices, department stores, and community centers also accept consultations.

(3) Establishment of conditions that enable the elderly to live with peace of mind

A new general framework for countermeasures for an aging society was formulated in December 2001. In addition to identifying five fundamental approaches, including that of gender equality, the framework provides guidelines on measures for issues to be handled in an across-the-board manner and five fields to be promoted such as recruitment/income, health/welfare, learning/social participation, living environment and research, and measures are being developed based upon them.

Moreover, the Nursing Care Insurance System, which provides nursing and medical services for citizens who require nursing care due to illnesses associated with aging, was inaugurated through the enactment of the Nursing Care Insurance Law in April 2000, and the number of people using these services (of which 70% are women) and the quantity of services are rising.

(4) The Law for the Promotion of Human Rights Education and Enlightenment and the Basic Plan for Human Rights Education and Enlightenment

The Law for the Promotion of Human Rights Education and Enlightenment was promulgated and enforced in December 2000. This law sets out the responsibilities of the state, local governments and citizens with respect to the promotion of measures related to human rights education and enlightenment, and stipulates necessary measures.

Based on the provisions of this law, a Basic Plan for Human Rights Education and Enlightenment was formulated in March 2002, to facilitate the comprehensive and systematic promotion of related measures. This basic plan incorporates measures to be implemented by related ministries and agencies with respect to each type of human rights issue, including those involving women, and ministries and agencies are currently engaged in promoting their respective measures based upon this basic plan.

J Women and the media

(1) Isolating unwanted sexual and violent expression

With regard to sexual and violent expression in harmful environments surrounding young people, the "Assembly for Youth Development" agreed on guidelines related to establishment of the environment surrounding the youth responding to developments in an information society in 2001, and interim measures required to protect youth from the harm of child prostitution associated with "online dating sites" in 2002, the government has made concerted efforts to implement various measures. In 2003, the Headquarters for the Promotion of the Fostering of Youth, chaired by the prime minister and comprised of all cabinet ministers, was established, and this entity formulated general guidelines on measures to foster youths, incorporating various measures for dealing with harmful environments surrounding the youth. The government is making concerted efforts to promote them.

In addition to cooperating with related institutions and organizations and local citizens to encourage related industries

to take independent measures regarding harmful, restricted-sale materials to young people by ordinances on the protection and fostering of youth, the police have been intensifying the guidance to individual traders and their investigation of unprincipled traders. Moreover, in order to isolate online sites depicting overly violent scenes, sexual contents and other contents considered harmful to youth, efforts are being made to popularize filtering system and raising awareness.

In order to contribute to taking measures against harmful environments surrounding the youth, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology conducted an on-site survey of forward-thinking measures being implemented by a US NPO and so forth in the fields of television, the internet and computer games, compiled a report, and has been disseminating information widely.

(2) Deliberations towards establishing rules for the internet and other new media

In March 2001, the Telecommunications Carriers Association, an organization of telecommunications carriers, with the support of the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications (MPHPT), formulated guidelines on the provision of internet connection services to facilitate an appropriate response to the distribution of illegal and harmful information over the internet. With regard to providers' independent responses, in May 2003, the Telecom Services Association, an organization of providers, with the support of MPHPT, revised the guidelines on codes of practice for internet service providers published in February 1998. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry has been supporting activities to popularize and raise awareness of guidelines on the establishment of internal rules for internet users formulated by the Internet Association Japan.

The police have been employing cyber patrols to gain a timely grasp of pornographic, illegal and harmful information commercializing sex over the internet, for making arrests and taking other measures against illegal information, and for notifying and encouraging related organizations to take other independent measures against harmful information.

(3) Promotion and improvement of information education and media literacy

A study committee convened by the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications deliberated measures to improve media literacy in the field of broadcasting from 1998 through 2000, and the Ministry is currently engaged in the development and lending service of media literacy materials based upon this.

In addition to making active use of computers in all subjects in elementary and junior and senior high school education to enable children to acquire the skills to collect, sort and create the information they need independently from amongst the flood of information available, and to disseminate their own information, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has been implementing the new Courses of Study in elementary and junior high schools since April 2002 (April 2003 for senior high schools) that make subjects and content related to information compulsory. In addition to efforts to improve media and information literacy by providing information via core websites that facilitate searches for various educational information and by using satellite communications to broadcast training courses and study programs to social education facilities, MEXT is endeavoring to enable citizens to use IT and make use of various learning opportunities.

(4) Compilation of the Handbook on public publicity with a gender-equal perspective

A Handbook on public publicity with a gender-equal perspective was compiled in 2003 to enable national government institutions garner more empathy and become more effective by incorporating important points when adding a gender-equal perspective in materials for public information, and this is being distributed to related national institutions.

K Women and the environment

(1) International contributions to the field of “Women and the environment”

The Global Environment Fund created with the aim of developing a citizens’ movement for conservation of environment supports activities that incorporate gender perspectives, such as the development of women’s networks and hosting of women’s international meetings on environment by civilian organizations in developing regions.

Japan hosted the 3rd World Water Forum and its International Ministerial Conference in March 2003, and the Ministerial Declaration adopted at that time emphasized that gender perspectives should be given full consideration in measures to resolve water issues, which will become the driving force for sustainable development and to alleviate poverty and starvation.

L The girl child

(1) Strengthening of measures against child prostitution and measures against commercial sexual exploitation of children

The National Police Agency has been rigorously investigating crimes involving child prostitution, including those committed overseas, based on the Law for Punishing Acts related to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and for Protection of Children enacted in November 1999, and crimes involving improper solicitation related to child prostitution via online dating services based on the Law concerning the Regulation of Acts Inducing Children using the Internet Dating Services and Other Matters enacted in September 2003. Moreover, police officers from South East Asia were invited to meetings for investigators held in 2002 and 2003 to strengthen and expand cooperation for investigating crimes involving child prostitution committed overseas.

Building on the outcome of the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Stockholm) in August 1996, Japan formulated a National Action Plan to fight against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in February 2001, and hosted the 2nd World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Yokohama) in December 2001. In 2003, Japan hosted the International Symposium on Trafficking of Children as a follow-up to the 2nd World Congress, and has displayed international leadership regarding this issue.

Japan has already signed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and is currently engaged in preparations towards their ratification.

(2) Promotion of measures against child abuse

Although the Child Welfare Law had been used to deal with child abuse, the Child Abuse Prevention Law was enacted in 2000, and efforts have been made to promote ways of tackling the issue by stipulating a precise definition of abuse and so forth. However, given the worsening situation surrounding this issue, as evidenced by the increasing number of consultations involving child abuse to child counseling centers and the number of difficult cases, Japan is endeavoring to promote measures to prevent child abuse through the amendment of the Child Welfare Law to strengthen the child counseling system and to reconsider views on facilities and foster parents, and the amendment of the Child Abuse Prevention Law to strengthen the responsibility of the state and local government, and to enlarge the radius of the duty of notice on child abuse.

MEXT continuously endeavors to make appropriate ways of responding to child abuse widely known among school

and social education employees and to foster close collaboration between school and social education employees, child counseling centers and other related institutions.

Part 3: Development of Institutional Framework

1) Establishment of a framework for the promotion of gender equality

(1) Enactment of the Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society and the formulation of the Basic Plan for Gender Equality

The Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society was enacted in June 1999 to provide a framework for the comprehensive promotion of gender equality. The Basic Law identifies 1) Respect for the human rights of women and men; 2) Consideration of social systems or practices; 3) Joint participation in planning and deciding policies; 4) Compatibility of activities in family life and other activities; and 5) International cooperation, as basic principles related to the formation of a gender-equal society. Given these basic principles, it stipulates the roles of the state, local governments and citizens for their respective responsibilities towards the formation of a gender-equal society.

The Basic Law stipulates the formulation of a Basic Plan for Gender Equality as a core mechanism for comprehensively and systematically promoting the formation of a gender-equal society, and the Basic Plan for Gender Equality was formulated in December 2000 in compliance with the law. This plan carries 11 priority objectives, and describes the basic direction of long-term measures up until fiscal 2010 and concrete measures to be implemented before the end of fiscal 2005 for each of them.

<11 Priority Objectives>

- i) Expand women's participation in policy decision-making processes
- ii) Review social systems and practices, and reform awareness from a gender-equal perspective
- iii) Secure equal opportunities and treatment in the field of employment
- iv) Establish gender equality in rural areas
- v) Support efforts of women and men to harmonize work with their family and community life
- vi) Develop conditions that allow the elderly to live with peace of mind
- vii) Eliminate all forms of violence against women
- viii) Support life-long health for women
- ix) Respect women's human rights in the media
- x) Enrich education and learning which promote gender equality and facilitate diversity of choice
- xi) Contribute to the "Equality, Development and Peace" of the global community

(2) Strengthening of the national machinery

As part of the measures to strengthen the Cabinet's functions on the occasion of the administrative reform of the central government in January 2001, the Cabinet Office was newly established as the administrative body responsible for carrying out the planning and overall coordination of policies among ministries from a higher position within the government structure. The Cabinet Office is responsible for "the promotion of the formation of a gender-equal society" as one of the most important political issues the government faces today. In the midst of the central government reform, which primarily aimed at downsizing the entire government, the Council for Gender Equality and the Gender Equality

Bureau were newly established within the Cabinet Office, thereby enhancing and strengthening the national machinery for the promotion of gender equality in Japan.

The Council for Gender Equality is chaired by the Chief Cabinet Secretary, who is also the Minister for Gender Equality, and is comprised of 12 cabinet ministers designated by the prime minister and 12 intellectuals appointed by the prime minister. In addition to studying and deliberating basic measures, basic policies and important issues related to the promotion of the formation of a gender-equal society, the Council newly monitors the implementation of government measures promoting the formation of a gender-equal society, and surveys the impact of government measures on the formation of a gender-equal society. There are currently four specialist committees established under the Council: the Specialist Committee on Basic Issues; the Specialist Committee on Violence against Women; the Specialist Committee on Monitoring and Handling Complaints; and the Specialist Committee on Gender Impact Assessment and Evaluation. A Specialist Committee on Support Measures for the Balancing of Work and Child Raising was previously established, but this committee has already completed its mission.

The Gender Equality Bureau, in addition to functioning as the secretariat for the Council for Gender Equality and the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality, undertakes the planning and overall coordination of various matters related to the promotion of the formation of a gender-equal society as a whole government. In collaboration with local governments and private organizations, it also endeavors to foster a trend in society as a whole to facilitate a range of efforts at all sectors and levels of society.

In addition to the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality, which has been established within the Cabinet Office for some time, ministerial headquarters for the promotion of gender equality, chaired by vice ministers, have been established within each ministry and agency since fiscal 2001, and have been promoting measures for gender equality in each ministry and agency.

2. System for follow-up on the implementation of measures

(1) Monitoring the implementation of measures by the Specialist Committee on Monitoring and Handling Complaints

The Council for Gender Equality monitors the implementation of government measures promoting the formation of a gender-equal society, and expresses its opinions to the prime minister and related ministers when necessary. Consequently, since fiscal 2001 the Specialist Committee on Monitoring and Handling Complaints of the Council for Gender Equality has monitored the implementation of measures of each ministry based on the Basic Plan for Gender Equality. The results of its monitoring activities are adopted by the Council for Gender Equality as opinions on the implementation of measures and future measures, and related ministries and agencies implement measures based upon these opinions. Before that, the Council has monitored the implementation of measures and adopted opinions on “promotion of the appointment of women to national advisory councils and committees”; “enlargement of the recruitment and promotion of female national public officers”; “policies on support measures for the balancing of work and child raising” and “collection, organization and provision of information related to gender equality”.

(2) White paper on gender equality

Based on the provisions of the Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society, the government submits to the Diet each year an annual report (White Paper on Gender Equality) describing the state of formation of a gender-equal society, policies implemented by the government to promote the formation of a gender-equal society in the previous fiscal year, and policies to be implemented in the current fiscal year to promote the formation of a gender-equal society. This report

describes the current status and related government measures for each of the 11 priority objectives in the Basic Plan for Gender Equality, fulfils the role of periodic follow-up on the Basic Plan, and contributes to the appropriate promotion of measures for gender equality by the government as a whole. This report is made accessible to the public at large via the Cabinet Office website.

3. Gender Impact Assessment and Evaluation

The Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society stipulates that the state and local governments give extra consideration to the formation of a gender-equal society when implementing measures recognized as having an impact on the formation of a gender-equal society. Hence, the Council for Gender Equality has the authority to study and deliberate on government measures affecting the formation of a gender-equal society and to express opinions to the prime minister and related ministers when necessary. The Specialist Committee on Gender Impact Assessment and Evaluation established under the Council has been conducting investigations since fiscal 2001. The report, compiled in December 2002, deliberates upon the taxation and social security system which have a significant effect on women's lifestyle choices, and recommended amendments to these systems. Some of these recommendations are reflected in later amendments to the tax and pensions systems. The Committee is currently placing greater emphasis on investigating the labour market and working style.

4. Measures taken by local governments

(1) Formulation of Basic Plans for Gender Equality and ordinances in Prefectures and Municipalities

The Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society stipulates that prefectures shall formulate Prefectural Plans for Gender Equality in accordance with the Basic Plan for Gender Equality, and that municipalities shall be encouraged to formulate Municipal Plans for Gender Equality, taking into consideration both the Basic Plan and Prefectural Plans for Gender Equality. Formulation of comprehensive plans is one of the effective measures to promote the comprehensive and systematic advancement of a gender-equal society in the local communities. The central government, therefore, provides local governments with necessary information when they formulate their plans. In particular, the central government actively supports municipalities by creating and providing manuals to help them formulate their plans. As of April 2003, all of the prefectures and 924 municipalities (28.8%) had formulated plans.

Moreover, progress has been made in terms of enactment of ordinances for gender equality, with 44 prefectures and 179 municipalities (5.6%) having enacted ordinances as of February 2004.

(2) Support for local governments

The central government supports prefectures and municipalities with the provision of information and training opportunities, and supports public relations and awareness-raising. In concrete terms, the central government holds Gender Equality Forums aimed at fostering interest and promoting measures in compliance with specific characteristics of local community towards the formation of a gender-equal society, and conducts programs that encourage prefectures and municipalities to become Gender Equality Declaration Cities in which the entire community promotes the formation of a gender-equal society. The central government also provides local government officials with training designed to deepen their understanding of national policies for gender equality and conducts training courses for counselors working for Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Centers and so forth.

5. Collaboration with civil society

Members of NGOs and intellectuals participate as members of specialist committees and the Council for Gender Equality, and their opinions are reflected in the Council's recommendations.

The Liaison Conference for the Promotion of Gender Equality (Egalite Network) has been convened since

September 1996 with the purpose of collaborating with civil society through widespread information and opinion exchange between all sectors and levels of society and mutual exchange among NGOs. The Council, which forms part of the National Machinery and is comprised of intellectuals from all sectors and levels of society and representatives of organizations invited by the Chief Cabinet Secretary, provides a forum for information and opinion-exchange on important measures for the formation of a gender-equal society and international trends between the government and all sectors and levels of society. The participation of representatives from the fields of construction and the environment further broadened its horizons in 2003.

In addition to soliciting opinions from a broad range of citizens, including NGOs, when compiling the fifth periodic report on implementation status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and endeavoring to reflect these in the report, the Council created opportunities for hearing opinions directly and exchanging information and opinions. Numerous NGOs observed consideration at the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women held in July 2003, and Committee members have praised the high level of interest in civil society in Japan.

6. Budgets for promotion of gender equality

Each year, the Cabinet Office collects and calculates each ministry's budget for measures related to the Basic Plan for Gender Equality. The budget for promoting gender equality was first raised on the agenda at the meeting of the Council for Gender Equality, held in September 2003, where reports on estimated requests for fiscal 2004 budgets were heard. Likewise, each ministry's measures related to the Basic Plan and details of government proposals for fiscal 2004 budgets for them were reported at the Council meeting in January 2004. The fiscal 2003 budget for promotion of Gender Equality was 9500 billion yen (of which, the budget for the elderly, one of the 11 priority objectives identified in the Basic Plan, was 7900 billion yen.)

<Summary of the Budget for promotion of Gender Equality>

(million yen)

Items	FY2003
Budget related to the 11 priority objectives of the Basic Plan	
Expand women's participation in policy decision-making processes	30
Review social systems and practices and reform awareness from a gender-equal perspective	245
Secure equal opportunities and treatment in the field of employment	53,249
Establish gender equality in rural areas	1,734
Support the efforts of women and men to harmonize work with their family and community life	1,378,245
Develop conditions that allow the elderly to live with peace of mind	7,919,399
Eliminate all forms of violence against women	3,871
Support life-long health for women	31,582
Respect women's human rights in the media	30
Enrich education and learning which promote gender equality and facilitate diversity of choice	101,390
xi) Contribute to the "Equality, Development and Peace" of the global community	657
Budget for improvement and strengthening of the structure promoting policies and measures	207
Total	9,490,638

Part 4: Main challenges and actions to address them

1. Promoting international cooperation to support women in development

When Japan extends ODA, it has been giving consideration to achieving women's empowerment and gender equality encompassing all stages of women's lives, and actively provided support with a focus on women's education, health, economic and social participation, in line with the "Japan's Initiative on Women in Development (WID)" announced at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, and under the framework of the Japan's Official Development Assistance Charter approved by the Cabinet in 1992 and the Japan's Medium-Term policy on ODA established in 1999.

In August 2003, approved by the Cabinet meeting, the government revised the Japan's ODA Charter, which had been the basic document on Japanese aid policy for more than 10 years. With regard to WID and gender, the perspective of gender equality is included as an important matter that should be taken into consideration at every phase of Japanese ODA, from policy formation to implementation phases, and it is clearly stated in the basic policies: "In particular, the perspective of gender equality is important. Japan will make further efforts to improve the status of women, giving full consideration to the active participation of women in development, and to ensuring that women reap benefits from development." The former ODA Charter also mentioned a similar concept, but incorporating it into the basic policies defines that it should be considered in an even broader range.

In fiscal 2002, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conducted the Evaluation Study on "Women in Development (WID)/Gender Policy - Evaluation of Initiative on WID" in collaboration with outside experts. The following points have been found as relevant: (i) the Japanese government announced to make continuous efforts to enhance WID-related development assistance with consideration for women's participation to, and women's benefits from development in 1995 at the establishment of the Initiative on WID; (ii) efforts for project finding on WID-related development assistance have been continued by the Japanese government in the case study countries of the study. The study showed that WID is a necessary and complementary means to achieve gender equality and also pointed out that Japan's efforts should not be limited to these three priority areas of the Initiative on WID (education, health as well as economic and social participation), and should be recognized as a part of comprehensive actions to achieve gender equality.

In response to the issues raised by the study, the report has proposed recommendations, for example, to further utilize knowledge of experts and implementing agencies, to better utilize/enhance WID focal points of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to put more emphasis on the gender-mainstreaming perspective in a revising Initiative.

Placing continued importance on the perspective of gender equality and aiming for fair and effective development cooperation, the government will make further efforts through ODA activities towards improving the status of women throughout the world. It will also keep in mind that empowering (building capacity for) women including girls accelerates social and economic development.

2. Expansion of women's participation in policy decision-making processes and in various fields

As mentioned in section 5 of Part 1, in addition to setting numerical targets for women's representation in leading positions and actively recruiting female workers into the public sector prior to the private sector, the government is endeavoring to make the purpose of these measures widely known among the private sector, requesting their cooperation, and encouraging them to engage in independent measures that determine numerical targets for each field and the deadlines for achieving them.

To enable women to actively participate in various fields in accordance with their aspirations and abilities, it is necessary to establish an efficient information system that realizes a one-stop information/network services that crosses the barriers of related institutions for supporting women's challenges and enables easy access to the information necessary

for women thinking of returning to work, starting their own business or setting up an NPO, for anyone, anywhere, at any time of their choosing. The Panel on Challenge Support Network, comprised of related ministries and intellectuals, has been convened since April 2003, and has been pressing ahead with deliberations on a proper comprehensive information system and will compile a report within fiscal 2003. In order to proceed with the establishment of challenge networks centered on hub facilities such as local women's centers and gender equality centers, the government is scheduled to implement model programs in some regions, to convene a regional liaison conference comprised of institutions involved in supporting challenges, to hold a symposium, and to strengthen the information dissemination capabilities of local hub facilities in fiscal 2004.

3. Toward further advancement in the formation of a gender-equal society

The Basic Plan for Gender Equality formulated in December 2000 aims to comprehensively and systemically promote measures taken by the government as a whole, and sets out the course for the formation of a gender-equal society. Thereafter, related ministries and agencies have been promoting various policies based on the direction of long-term policies anticipated until 2010 and the concrete policies to be implemented before the end of fiscal 2005 described in the Basic Plan, and the formation of a gender-equal society is steadily proceeding.

The concrete policies mentioned above will need to be revised by the end of fiscal 2005 based on the implementation of heretofore policies, and deliberations on matters to be included in the plan are scheduled to begin in fiscal 2004.

While the government has been comprehensively and systematically promoting policies based on the Basic Plan, it has been said that it is difficult to get a concrete image and a clear understanding of a gender-equal society.

In view of this situation, the Cabinet Office established the Panel on the Future of a Gender-equal Society under the Chief Cabinet Secretary in July 2003. The Panel aims at gaining public understanding from all sectors and all levels of society on the formation of a gender-equal society by portraying a concrete image of a possible gender-equal society in the future up to the year 2020.

The Panel examines current and future problems and compiles a report in spring 2004, while paying attention to interrelationships among men and women's participation in policy decision-making processes, recruitment/appointment, and other related areas. The image of a gender-equal society portrayed in the report that the government seeks to realize will be then disseminated actively through public relations and awareness-raising activities to gain the understanding of a wide range of citizens of both genders and all generations.

Japan will continue to promote the formation of a gender-equal society by implementing various measures.