

## **Message from Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister and President of the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality**

Creating a gender-equal society where men and women can give full play to their individuality and abilities while respecting each others' human rights is a priority for Japan. Promoting gender equality is an integral part of the overall structural reforms that I have been working on.

One of the major concerns facing Japan is the problem of the declining birthrate and shrinking population. In this context, promoting gender equality and enhancing a better work-life balance is also important. Last year, I appointed a minister to be jointly responsible for gender equality issues and measures to deal with the falling birthrate in order to lend more power to our efforts in these areas. Guided by the Second Basic Plan for Gender Equality adopted by the government at the end of last year, the government will continue to work in partnership with local authorities, private groups and citizens to accelerate the reforms aimed at creating a gender-equal society.

## **Message from Kuniko Inoguchi, Minister of State for Gender Equality and Social Affairs**

Under the strong leadership of the Cabinet, the Japanese government has been reinforcing gender equality measures by establishing the necessary national machinery, including the Council for Gender Equality and the Gender Equality Bureau at the Cabinet Office in 2001.

In October 2005, I was appointed as Minister of State for Gender Equality and Social Affairs. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi took the initiative to establish a Ministerial position devoted to Gender Equality and Social Affairs, an area that had previously been covered by the Chief Cabinet Secretary. This is indicative of the strong commitment of the government in prioritizing social policies including gender equality. Immediately upon assuming office, I revised the Basic Plan for Gender Equality, which was approved by Cabinet in December 2005. It includes measures to enhance gender equality initiatives in every field. In partnership with the international community and especially the United Nations, Japan is also helping to improve the status of women throughout the world by mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policy areas. Japan places a high priority on gender equality perspective in its international development cooperation program as well, as indicated by our Gender and Development (GAD) Initiative announced in 2005.

I will redouble my efforts to bring about greater gender equality both in Japan and around the world by making sure that the new basic plan is appropriately implemented.