

APEC Joint SME-Women Ministerial Meeting

By Masako Mori

Minister of State for Gender Equality

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(Introduction)

Thank you, Chair.

His Excellency Dr. Sjarifuddin Hasan, Minister for Cooperatives and SMEs, Her Excellency Linda Amalia Sari Gumelar, Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, and distinguished delegates:

I would like to express my appreciation for making an opportunity to speak at the Joint SME-Women Ministerial Meeting.

Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to the APEC Secretariat and to the government of the Republic of Indonesia for hosting this joint meeting as a first attempt to empower women in Small and Medium sized Enterprises.

(Active Participation by Women in Japan)

In March 2011, Japan suffered from the Great East Japan Earthquake.

My home region, Fukushima, has been suffered greatly as a result of the earthquake. Because I was born in Fukushima, and because I am a mother, and because I am a member of the National Diet, I have been taking part in activities for reconstruction of my home region.

Now, because I am the Minister of the State, I devote myself to the rebirth of Fukushima, under the leadership of Prime Minister Abe.

In disaster areas by the earthquake, I have seen many women who played an important role in rescue operations, medical assistance, and fire fighting, as well as in restoration and reconstruction.

Some female farmers in Fukushima fit this description. They started a new business which produces and sells rice cakes, rice pudding, and other processed farm products. Their small company has grown to 12 employees, , and contributes to job creation and community development.

I believe that the activities of women will give rise to a new vitality in Japan, as well as reconstruction after the Great East Japan Earthquake.

As Minister of State in the Abe Cabinet, which was formed at the end of last year, I will advance my effort to create a country in which all women can shine, with confidence and pride in the lives they are leading.

The Abe Cabinet considers women's active participation to be a core of the Growth Strategy. Under the strong leadership of Prime Minister Abe, concrete actions are being taken toward active participation by women.

In Japan, there are two tasks in order to promote participation by women. First, the ratio of women in leadership remains low compared to the other countries, although the government has set a target of an “approximately 30% ratio by 2020. Second, around sixty percent of women leave work due to childbirth/child rearing, and face difficulties in continuing work.

Hence, Prime Minister Abe asked the three heads of Japan’s biggest economic organizations to promote more women to management positions and to set a target of at least one female executive per listed company in April.

Moreover, the “Forum for Promoting Active Participation by Young People and Women” was held, at Prime Minister Abe’s initiative, to utilize women further in the workforce.

In the process of discussion at the forum, we had dialogues with relevant people. For example, a woman in her 30s who started a nursing and rehabilitation business is securing excellent human resources and making fine achievements by providing various style of employment which fit the lifestyles of the employees, rather than recruiting employees who fit a single style of employment.

As a result, the forum recommended taking the following specific measures, in the outcome document published in May.

- Granting incentives and other measures to businesses that strive to support the promotion of women’s participation and balancing work and child-rearing, etc.
- Support for participation that corresponds to women’s life stages.
- Creation of an environment in which both men and women can balance work with child-rearing and their daily lives.
- Promotion of efforts such as expanding hiring and appointing female government employees.

The recommendation contained specific measures on promotion of entrepreneurial culture, which is a topic of this meeting, such as support for starting or initiating businesses, support for loans and other fund procurement, and so on.

I confidently expect that women entrepreneurs, who will produce innovative merchandise and services, and will create various styles of work, should lead the Japanese economy to a path of growth.

These specific measures were included into “New Growth Strategy: The Formulation of ‘Japan Revitalisation Strategy - Japan is Back-’” which

was approved by the Cabinet meeting in June.

I will proceed steadily to implement the strategy so that women could realize their full potential and harness their talents.

(Closing)

To conclude my speech on the latest measures to promote active participation by women in Japan, I would like to refer to the APEC Leaders' Growth Strategy.

In 2010, Japan hosted APEC meetings, and a Leader's Meeting was held in Yokohama.

APEC leaders agreed to the Growth Strategy at the meeting. This was the first and most comprehensive long-term growth strategy in the Asia-Pacific region as a growth centre in the world.

To achieve balanced, inclusive, sustainable, innovative, and secure growth, we – us gathered here in this joint meeting -- must continue to implement concrete policies, under the growth strategy, to promote the economic empowerment of women.

I hope the measures being taken by the government of Japan will contribute to the growth of the APEC region; cumulatively they could be a good role model for other economies in the region to implement their own unique policies.

I would like to thank you all for listening so attentively.