

Keynote Speech of Hon. Fumiko Hayashi
Mayor of Yokohama City
at the APEC Women and the Economy 2015:
High Level Policy Dialogue on Women and the Economy

[Metro Manila, Philippines, on September 18, 2015]

Good morning, everyone. My name is Fumiko Hayashi, mayor of Yokohama. I'm honored to deliver the keynote speech here today. I would like to sincerely thank Chair Nora Terrado and all involved.

Ever since Yokohama hosted the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in 2010, I have taken part in APEC's Women and the Economy discussions. Recently, the movement to empower women in Japan has grown at a fast pace. Under the initiative of Prime Minister Abe, "promoting the empowerment of women" has been designated a major pillar of Japan's growth strategy for the first time. Both government and public efforts are accelerating. This August, following on from last year, the World Assembly for Women in Tokyo 2015, which could be called a women's version of the Davos forum, was held and female leaders from around the world exchanged dynamic ideas.

As the head of Japan's most populous municipality with more than 3.7 million people, I have devoted myself to making Yokohama a city where it is easier and more fulfilling for women to work than anywhere else in Japan. Especially, we were quick to focus on the number one barrier to women's social advancement – the availability of child care – and have worked to improve the situation. Through various measures such as increasing the number of facilities and carefully matching them to resident needs, we have successfully reduced the number of children on waiting lists to zero. This is spreading throughout Japan and changing the society. Furthermore, with a variety of policies including support for female entrepreneurs and networking among working women, we are at the forefront of developments in resident life and regional economy.

I think we can all agree that organizations and the larger society are enriched by women's unique perspectives and abilities to empathize. Currently I serve as president of the Mayors Association of Designated Cities, which is made up of the mayors of 20 major Japanese cities. I became this association's first female president in the spring of last year and have stimulated discussion through dialogue with the other leaders. I believe I have been uniquely able to change relationships and foster constructive debate by seeing things from the viewpoints of others.

Efforts in Japan are now expanding beyond empowerment of women to

address a huge issue at the root of Japanese society: long working hours. The idea that women are meant to do the housework, child-rearing and care and men are meant to devote long hours to a profession has long stood in the way of women's social advancement, but now not only women, but men have also started to move toward changing the way things have been. Furthermore, revisions to tax and social security systems, which also hinder women's social advancement, are starting to be considered. Surely a society in which women are truly empowered is a society in which all people, regardless of gender, are empowered.

From Gifu in 2010 to the U.S., Russia, Indonesia and Beijing, China, I am always motivated by APEC discussions. I am energized for further action through the sharing of the realities, challenges and best practices in each economy.

This year, we have had many fruitful discussions here in Manila as well. "Women have the role of promoting inclusive growth. This is our propelling conviction.

Corporations and NPOs as well as cities and economies; all kinds of bodies are working both locally and globally and my hope is that we can focus these efforts into a powerful message that is transmitted around the world.

Our dialogue and practice is what sets all of this in motion. Together with all of you, I am determined to see APEC continue to grow and to bring about a rich future.

Thank you very much.