

Statement by Ms. Hiroko Hashimoto

Representative of Japan

At the Fifty-fifth Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

Mr. Chairperson,

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude and respect to you, your fellow Bureau members and all those involved, for your dedicated efforts in preparing for this meeting.

Mr. Chairperson,

Japan sincerely welcomes the official commencement of the work of UN Women this year, under the strong leadership of Executive Director, Madam Michelle Bachelet.

2010 was the year during which the gender issue gained tremendous impetus within the international community, with Beijing +15 in March, the decision to establish UN Women in July, and the Security Council Open Debate on Women and Peace and Security to commemorate the tenth anniversary of its resolution 1325 in October. Throughout the course of this year, with the official launch of UN Women, we hope that the international momentum in the gender issue will be further enhanced and that steady and concrete developments will be made in gender-related undertakings.

Mr. Chairperson,

Last year at the Beijing + 15 meeting, Japan announced its strong commitment to formulate the “Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality” by the end of 2010, in order to solidify our efforts to achieve a gender-equal society. As per our commitment, the new Basic Plan was approved by the cabinet last December and describes images of the society Japan seeks to realize. We will continue our efforts to achieve i) a gender-equal society without gender stereotypes; ii) a society in which human rights of women and men are respected and individuals can live with dignity; iii) a dynamic society with diversity in which women and men can maximize their personalities and capacities; and iv) a society which gains international esteem in terms of gender-equality.

Among the 15 priority areas of the Basic Plan are: “gender equality in science and

technology and academic fields” and “enhancement of education and learning to promote gender equality and facilitate diversity of choice”. Measures in the science and technology fields include creating environments in which female researchers can balance their researches and child-rearing and supporting female students’ selection of science and technology courses, with a view to accelerating women’s participation in those fields. Academic associations in Japan, such as the Science Council of Japan (SCJ), are also actively working in the field of priority theme of the 55th CSW.

In Japan, about 60% of women leave the labour market around the time of birth of the first child, and the Japanese female labour force participation rate reveals the “M-shaped curve problem”, with women in the 30s at the bottom of the curve, and women in the late 20s and the late 40s shaping the peaks. . Also, when compared with other developed countries, there still exists a gap between the average wage of men and that of women, though the situation has been gradually improving over the long-term.

It is becoming a shared understanding that having women play an active role is a key to rejuvenate our economy and society. The new Basic Plan for Gender Equality emphasizes this view. It sets concrete numerical targets on the employment rate for women, and so on, and stipulates measures to support women in fulfilling their potential, and for their continued employment. We will also pursue measures for men to reconsider their work styles, such as cutting long working hours, in order to eliminate gender stereotypes and to promote their participation in household tasks and child-rearing activities.

The measures based on the Third Basic Plan will be regularly followed up on and encouraged for further implementation at the Council for Gender Equality, which consists of related cabinet ministers and intellectuals, and at the Specialist Committee placed under the Council.

Mr. Chairperson,

Last year, Japan, as chair of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), hosted three meetings on the subject of gender equality: the APEC Women Leaders Network (WLN) and the Gender Focal Point Network (GFPN) in September, and the Women's Entrepreneurship Summit (WES) in October. We believe that such gatherings provided a platform for deepening a network among women leaders in order to promote the

economic empowerment of women.

In order to ensure women's equal access to full employment and decent work, it is important to lessen the disparities between boys and girls regarding enrolment in basic education. One of the factors that prevent girls from going to school is the lack of proper learning environments such as well-educated female teachers, gender-sensitive curricula and safe toilets for girls. In accordance with the "School for All" model which Prime Minister Naoto Kan announced on the occasion of the UN MDGs Summit last September, Japan will continue to promote assistance which will contribute to the comprehensive improvement of the learning environment so that all children and youth, including girls, can have access to quality education.

With regards to the "women and peace and security" agenda, as was mentioned by Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Makiko Kikuta, at the Security Council Open Debate on Women and Peace and Security last October, Japan expects that UN Women will play a leadership role within the UN system in operationalizing the set of indicators to monitor the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325, and also in accelerating women's participation in peacebuilding. To that end, with a view to strengthening the consolidation of peace in Afghanistan, the Government has recently contributed 4.5 million dollars to the UN Women's project to assist the Afghan Commission for Elimination of Violence against Women. Japan, as one of the initial members of the Executive Board of UN Women, is committed to contribute actively to the work of UN Women.

Mr. Chairperson,

Finally, I would like to mention that the entire government is currently engaged in the follow-up on the recommendations received from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The advancement of the status of women in Japan has been realized alongside the development at the international fora such as the UN, and supported by powerful movements of women's organizations at home. I would like to conclude my statement by expressing our determination to continue to closely cooperate with the international community, international organizations and civil society including NGOs.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.