

ESCAP/Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+25 Review
Country Statement by Mr. Ito, Head of the Delegation of Japan

Madam Chairperson,

Next year, 2020, will mark 25 years since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and five years since the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I believe it is extremely valuable to share our experiences here at this conference. I am sure this will contribute to discussions at the UN Commission on the Status of Women for next March.

Madam Chairperson,

Japan recognize that it is vitally important to create a society in which all citizens, whether female or male, can respect human rights each other and accept their share of both enjoyment and responsibility to make the most of their individuality and capabilities. This is essential both to increase the diversity and vitality of Japanese society with declining population, and to ensure genuine equality of opportunity between women and men.

For the past five years, we have been pressing ahead with initiatives guided by Japan's Basic Act for a Gender-equal Society, which was enacted in light of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Japan has driven women's empowerment forward as a top priority. In October 2014, the Cabinet reinforced the national machinery, setting up the Headquarters for Creating a Society in which All Women Shine, which comprises all Cabinet ministers and is headed by the prime minister.

Since 2015 this headquarters has determined the Intensive Policy to Accelerate the Empowerment of Women every year, which is reflected into the government's budgeting.

The Act on the Promotion of Female Participation and Career Advancement went into full effect in April 2016. The Act obligates companies to draw up action plans for women's empowerment and disclose information relating to women's participation and advancement in their organizations. This year, the Act was amended to increase the number of companies to which it applies.

In December 2015, the Cabinet decided on the Fourth Basic Plan for Gender Equality in line with the Basic Act. The Council for Gender Equality, comprising relevant Cabinet ministers and experts led by the Chief Cabinet Secretary, has discussed it vigorously. Also, a wide variety of stakeholders were involved in the process. Around 4,000 comments from the public were received, and around 1,000 citizens attended public hearings.

And last year, the Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field was enacted.

As a result of promoting such initiatives, the situation of women's participation has been improved.

For example,

- (1) Women in employment has increased around 2.9 million to almost 30 million in these 6 years, despite a decrease in the working-age population as a whole.
- (2) The percentage of women in employment between the ages of 25 to 44 increased substantially from 67.7% in 2012 to 76.5% in 2018, demonstrating steady progress toward eliminating the so-called M-shaped curve issue.
- (3) The number of female board members in Japanese listed companies has increased 3.4-fold in these 7 years.

On the other hand, we also face challenges, such as:

- (1) The low ratio of women's participation in leadership position
- (2) The difficulty of balancing work and private life due to long working hours
- (3) Violence against women

I believe that further action will be necessary to try to resolve these issues.

Madam Chairperson,

In Japan, at the request of the prime minister, the Council for Gender Equality is currently deliberating the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality, to cover the period from 2021 to 2025. This new plan will be decided by the Cabinet at the end of next year.

Now and in the future, we will continue to work hand-in-hand with civil society as we drive forward our efforts to resolve the challenges we face.

Thank you for your kind attention.