

ESCAP/Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+25 Review
Item3a“Realizing gender equality for women and girls in the thematic area of inclusive development,
shared prosperity and decent work”

Statement by Dr. Yumiko Tanaka Representative of Japan
64nd Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Japan recognizes that greater participation by women in every field of endeavor is vitally important if we are to increase the diversity and vitality of our society and enable our economy to sustain strong growth. We also recognize that active participation by women in positions of authority within companies will make this country more competitive.

In line with this recognition, Japan instituted the Act on the Promotion of Female Participation and Career Advancement in 2015. The Act obligates companies to draw up and disclose action plans on women’s empowerment, having understood the situation within their own organizations and analyzed the relevant issues. They are also obligated to disclose information relating to women’s participation and advancement in their organizations. This year, the Act was amended to extend the obligation to draw up action plans to more companies and to strengthen the requirements with regard to disclosure of information.

Japan is also implementing an initiative in relation to procurement of goods and services by the national government and incorporated administrative agencies. Companies certified as complying with the Act on the Promotion of Female Participation and Career Advancement, or with similar certifications, are awarded additional evaluation points during procurement that evaluates factors other than price. In fiscal 2017, such procurement amounted to approximately 1.34 trillion yen in value, approximately 27% of all eligible procurement for the national government and incorporated administrative agencies combined.

As a result of initiatives such as these, the number of women in employment increased for six consecutive years, by a total of around 2.9 million, even though the working-age population as a whole was decreasing continuously. The percentage of women in employment between the ages of 25 and 44, when many have childcare responsibilities, increased from 67.7% in 2012 to 76.5% in 2018, demonstrating steady progress toward eliminating the so-called M-shaped curve issue.

Japan is facing population decline, a head of the Asia-Pacific countries, as a result of a falling birthrate combined with a rising ratio of senior citizens. Such falling birthrate and graying of society is expected to take hold among other countries in the region from now on. Japan is leading the way when it comes to such challenges, so I hope that these initiatives to increase women’s participation will serve as a useful reference for everybody here.