

Statement by Dr. Yoriko Meguro
Representative of Japan
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Madam Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to congratulate you, Madam Chair, and other members of the new Bureau on the assumption of your important roles.

Madam Chair,

On the occasion of the “Beijing + 10” high-level meeting, we reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and pledged to take further steps towards the implementation of those documents.

Encouraging gender equality is an integral part of the structural reform being carried out by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. In this connection, in October of last year, Prime Minister Koizumi appointed Prof. Kuniko Inoguchi, as Minister of State for Gender Equality and Social Affairs, the first ministerial post to deal exclusively with these issues.

As a result of the general election that took place in September 2005, there are now an unprecedented number of female members of the House of Representatives – forty-three (43), an increase by twenty-six (26) percent. While women’s participation in society is growing and more women are involved in decision-making processes, the proportion of the whole they represent remains unsatisfactory. Japan therefore will continue to vigorously promote gender equality and undertake reforms to create a fair society in which both men and women can fully exercise their capacity to achieve self-fulfillment.

One of the specific measures Japan has taken was its revision of the Basic Plan for Gender Equality at the end of last year, taking into account the outcome of the “Beijing + 10”

high-level meeting. The new Second Plan covers comprehensive measures to be implemented before the end of fiscal year 2010, such as setting a numerical target for the percentage of women in managerial positions in every field and applying temporary special measures for attaining those goals, as well as setting an additional numerical target for female scientists, and enhancing measures to support them in their research activities.

Madam Chair,

In this statement, I would like to outline what Japan has achieved and the challenges it faces in the area of gender equality especially with regards to the two themes of the current session of the Commission. Let me turn to the first theme: "Enhanced participation of women in development."

Madam Chair,

At the World Summit 2005, our leaders once again acknowledged the importance of full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, the international community agreed that a common challenge that all the nations of the world face was finding a way to ensure an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, *inter alia*, in the fields of education, health and work. This is certainly a cross-cutting issue.

Madam Chair,

In the field of education, Japan has taken measures to enhance opportunities for women to engage in life-long learning and career training, including providing support for women who, having retired from the workforce once to have a family, wish to undertake a second career, and for those trying to balance their career and the responsibility of raising a family. A particular target has been the enhancement of women's participation in the fields of science and technology. Furthermore, considering the remarkably low proportion of women engaged in research in Japan compared to other countries - only 11.9 percent - , the government has, for the first time, under the initiative of the Minister of State for Gender Equality to work in close cooperation with the Council for Science and Technology Policy, set in the Second Plan and elsewhere, a numerical target of achieving 25 percent of women in the field of natural sciences.

In the field of health, Japan is taking measures to provide maternal and child health care services that continue through all periods from pregnancy to delivery, and also health education and counseling, in order to ensure that women remain healthy throughout their lives.

Comprehensive measures to address HIV/AIDS have also been taken, including assurance of medical care, testing and consulting services as well as dissemination of information on how to deal with the virus.

Madam Chair,

In the area of work, Japan has developed administrative guidance and methods of providing assistance to settle disputes and helping private companies to take positive action for equal employment opportunities. In addition, the government has promoted plans to support those balancing work and family responsibilities and provided information services and training programs to help rural women engaged in agriculture improve their technical and management skills so that they can enhance their economic status.

Madam Chair,

Japan has implemented international and domestic measures to increase women's participation in development. To this end, Japan announced the "Initiative on Gender and Development" at the last session of the CSW, through which it is attempting to integrate gender perspective into every phase of Japan's ODA implementation and strengthen ODA assistance to developing countries making efforts to achieve gender equality and empower women. In the policy formulation process, Japan takes into consideration women's need to have access to basic social services in the areas of education and health and also to have access to equal employment opportunities.

Although there continue to be numerous challenges to efforts to ensure a positive environment in the fields of education, health and work, Japan renews its commitment to further implement its current policies.

Madam Chair,

I would now like to turn to the second theme: "Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels." For the realization of a gender-equal society, it is essential to ensure equal participation and to maintain a democratic system in which everyone's views are given proper opportunities to be reflected

Madame Chair,

In Japan at the time of the First World Conference on Women in 1975, the proportion of females in the national advisory councils and committees stood at only 2.4 percent. As a result of promoting measures to achieve the "30 percent target as soon as possible but no later than the end of fiscal year 2005," this figure has risen to 30.9 percent, a success that was

achieved half a year ahead of schedule.

The level of women's participation in decision-making processes in Japan, however, is still very low. There has been, in general, little improvement at any level, national or local, public or private. It is essential to enhance women's participation in all the areas that touch on daily life, in response to changes that have taken place in socio-economic conditions.

Recognizing these obstacles, the revised Basic Plan for Gender Equality clearly stipulates that greater participation by women is necessary in the fields of environment and disaster prevention and recovery. Moreover, the Plan clarifies the 30 percent target that was set for the proportion of leadership positions women should occupy in all fields of society by 2020. Japan will undertake an initiative to promote the "temporary special measures" defined in its Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society, and will support local governments and private enterprises as they take appropriate measures to encourage further participation by women in decision-making.

To conclude, Madam Chair, Japan will promote and implement policies enhancing both the status of women and gender equality within and outside our nation, and it will do so in close partnership with international organizations and civil society, including NGOs. Japan also deems it important to establish partnerships that extend beyond borders. In this connection, we would like to propose to hold a meeting this year in Tokyo at the ministerial level, hosted by Prof. Kuniko Inoguchi, the Minister of State for Gender Equality, in cooperation with the national machineries of our Asian neighbors in particular, in order for us to exchange our views on policies on gender equality.

I thank you, Madam Chair.