

APEC Women and the Economy Forum (WEF)
High Level Policy Dialogue on Women and the Economy
(HLPDWE) Session 2
Statement of Mr. Atsuhiko Beppu, Vice-Minister
Preparing for the future and its changing economic scenarios
October 4th, 2019

Thank you, Your Excellency, Ms. Isabel Plá.

Fourth industrial revolution and digitalization is changing the way we live and work, and they can be a driving force to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

On the other hand, there are some concerns.

One example is that past gender disparities could be replicated in the future, if AI judges recruitment or promotion, because AI relies on machine learning from past data.

This year, Japanese government compiled a document titled "Principles of Human-centric AI Society" after a lot of discussions of multi-stakeholders including academia, researchers, companies, and civil society organizations. As for diversity, it stipulates that all people should be treated fairly without undue discrimination based on their background, including gender, and diverse perspectives should be incorporated in the process of development and utilization of AI.

Another concern for Japan is very low participation of women in STEM field. Currently the ratio in university is only 17%.

The Japanese government has set goals to increase the proportion of female STEM students and women recruited as researchers in the natural sciences, and is promoting girls to enter STEM field and creating an environment where it is easier for women to continue to work.

One of the intervention is “STEM challenge” project for students. In Japan, students choose whether to go science course or literature course in the middle of high-school, and girl students are affected by the gender stereotype or unconscious-bias of teachers and parents. Therefore it is important for girls to see the role models and know the fun of studying and working in STEM field before their choice.

Local governments, companies, and universities collaborate and provide visiting and learning opportunity for girl students of elementary, junior high and high school. Sometimes parents are also invited and deepen the understanding. It is intensively held in summer vacation, and in this summer, 36 thousand girls attended in 179 program in all over Japan.

Last year, Minister appointed STEM Girls Ambassador to attract more young women to STEM careers. Ambassadors include astronauts, civil engineer who was project manager of Subway

Construction in India, University associate professor who started her business.

In 2020 programming education will become a compulsory subject in elementary schools, providing all girls and boys with an opportunity to study from an early age.

Japanese government will dramatically enhance opportunities for recurrent education, which will enable support for those returning to work after long absences due to child-rearing, help people to shift into new careers in IT and digital fields and advance their careers as leaders.

Japan welcomes the Santiago Roadmap, which set the target to increase the gender balance in the STEM field, and admire the leadership of Chile. We will strengthen our effort.

Thank you .