

APEC Women and the Economy Forum
High Level Political Dialogue
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30th of June 2012

【Introduction】

Her Excellency Valentina Matvienko, the Chairperson of the Council of Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation and distinguished delegates:

I would like to express my appreciation for making an opportunity to speak in the High Level Political Dialogue on APEC Women and the Economy Forum.

Furthermore, I would like to pay my respect to Her Excellency Valentina Matvienko and to the government of the Russia Federation for hosting this remarkable forum.

【Rebirth of Japan and women's participation】

In March 2011, Japan suffered from the Great East Japan Earthquake. After the earthquake, Japan received kind support from around the world. I would like to express my gratitude for that much-needed support.

Japan has been facing many difficulties, such as the Great East Japan Earthquake and worldwide volatilities in financial markets. Every effort is being made for the earthquake-affected areas to make certain progress toward reconstruction and for Japan to pass on prosperity for the future.

Women hold the greatest potential to move Japan forward. This notion is not limited to the idea that women will supplement the demanding labor force. Women's participation in a variety of social settings and the demonstration of their capabilities are "a critical key" to increasing the diversity of society as a whole and restoring a vibrant Japan.

It is our hope that women, the force of Japan's rebirth, will further shine in society.

【Actions taken by APEC】

"Women and the economy" has been discussed in APEC.

In 1996, female leaders in government, academia, and business from 21

APEC economies gathered unofficially as the APEC Women Leaders Network. Since then the meeting has been held annually to discuss the expansion of women's roles in the economy.

In 2010, Japan hosted the 15th APEC Women Leaders Network meeting in Tokyo. The theme of "Creation of New Global Economic Activities by Women - Realization through People, Nature and Culture" was discussed so as to create innovation utilizing women's point of view and ideas. The results of the meeting were included in the declaration "The Yokohama Vision – Bogor and Beyond" and in the Growth Strategy by The Leader's Meeting as implementation of policies aimed at enhancing education and training with equal opportunities for women.

Last year, the San Francisco Declaration was adopted in the APEC Women and the Economy Summit in San Francisco. In March this year, Japan hosted the "APEC Leadership Forum on Women: Powerhouse for Economic Growth" in Yokohama, which focused on improving women's leadership in the wake of the San Francisco Declaration.

And this year, the APEC Women and Economy Forum is held under the chairmanship of Ms. Matviyenko. We consider it is highly regarded as a timely and important point of view for each economy to move forward actions under the three themes "Innovative Economy," "Business Opportunities," and "Human Resources," all of which have been discussed in the forum.

【Innovative Economy】

In Japan, many women develop high-value-added products, based upon their own ideas and the views of consumers. Their action contributes toward expansion of new markets.

For example, I know a woman who experienced difficulties as she breast-fed on a train carriage on her commute. She started designing new outfits for breast-feeding. Her basic idea was "new lifestyles for new mothers" and established her own corporation.

I know another woman who has distinguished foresight and analytical abilities. She produced thermal underwear with thin material and other apparel for women. Her apparel won big markets. She contributed to extension of achievement of women's department and record-high sales for her corporation.

Creating women's innovation is a crucial key.

The government of Japan has been taking incentive measures, such as

providing low-interest loans for women with entrepreneurial motivation. And some local governments have been running incubation offices for female entrepreneurs.

In areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake, measures for female entrepreneurs are taken to make certain progress toward reconstruction.

Science and technology serves as a basis for innovation. However, in Japan, the percentage of female researchers is just 13.8%, which is lower than many other countries. As for the proportion of female students in university, female students in engineering comprise just 11.2%, compared to 66.2% in the humanities.

These facts are evidence of the need to further support female researchers and students who are studying science and technology.

【Business opportunities】

The government of Japan is also providing business opportunities to promote women entrepreneurs. For example:

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries sets additional funding to support women entrepreneurs in agricultural, forestry, and fisheries communities as subsidies relating to the processing and distribution of agricultural products.

The central government and local governments implement preferential treatment for corporations that are actively working on issues of gender equality when ministries or local governments select contractors for research related to gender equality and work-life balance.

【Human Capital】

As for human capital, we enhance career education and vocational education for the smooth transition from schools to business and work, along with supporting life planning for women.

We will also support corporations, where it is difficult to secure and train mentors and role-models within, to create systems to train women by constructing networks of corporations.

We will supply high-quality education and childcare for all preschool children with drastic increases in child-raising budgets, regardless of the parents' work.

We will also make efforts to encourage efficient work, rather than prolonged work.

【Current condition of Japan】

In last year's APEC Women and the Economy Summit, untapped women's talent was pointed out. The provisional calculation was that GDP in Japan would rise 16 % by eliminating barriers of women's participation in work.

In Japan, it's true that there is still a low percentage of female division managers, even though the proportion of female section managers in private corporations is on a rising trend.

With regard to the salary gap between male and female regular workers, the level of wages for female regular workers in 2011 is still at 70.6% of male regular workers.

【Awareness rising for men and business manager】

As I mentioned earlier, women's participation in business is limited both in quality and in quantity. However, the potential capability of women can be a driving force for corporations and for Japan's economic growth. That must be understood by men, including management and financiers.

Therefore, we decided "Operation Working NADESHIKO," the nickname of Japanese female football team, including the following actions, in the Cabinet meeting held on June 22, 2012.

The first is to "visualize" the positive influence to corporations and women themselves by the successes of women and the losses incurred to society and to individuals when the capabilities of women are buried.

The second is to widely disseminate information about women's successes, targets, and measures by individual corporations.

The third is to visit and encourage 20,000 corporations in order to increase corporate efforts toward positive action.

The forth is in order to promote starting up of business by women, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and the SME Agency, in coordination with other related ministries and agencies, will make detailed support such as financial and administrative support.

The fifth is to encourage the manifestation of CEO-level commitment to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment (Signature to the United

Nations "Women Empowerment Principles" (WEPs)) to economic organizations and corporations.

【Actions to be taken in APEC】

The government of Japan is going to take actions under the leadership of Prime Minister Noda.

We, therefore, propose collaborating actions on leadership of Women in APEC economies as follows.

First, we must accumulate best practices that show that women's leadership has many positive impacts on economic prosperity and business competitiveness, and share those results among APEC economies.

The next is the promotion of a multi-layered international network between the public and private sectors, non-profit organizations, individuals, and international counterparts.

【Closing】

In closing, the Republic of Indonesia will host APEC next year.

We expect the Republic of Indonesia to continue activities for "Women and the Economy" based upon the result of this forum. We will give our support as much as possible.

I would like to thank you all for listening so attentively.