

2017 APEC Women and the Economy Forum
HIGH LEVEL POLICY DIALOGUE ON WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY
Policy Recommendations of Head of Delegation of Japan
Ms. Keiko Takegawa, Director General, Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office
Friday, 29th September 2017

Thank you, Your Excellency Dao Ngoc Dung, Minister of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs of Viet Nam. I am honored to be here and to be given an opportunity to speak in front of such a distinguished group of individuals. I would also like to express my gratitude to Viet Nam for hosting this wonderful forum.

As Japan is one of the world's first economies to enter a depopulation pattern, our sustainable growth depends on maintaining a labor force and raising productivity and innovation. The key to that effort will be "Enhancing Women's Inclusion and Economic Empowerment"

Recognizing that women are the most powerful potential in Japan, we are pushing forward with a variety of initiatives to ensure that women who are willing to work are not only able to work but can also work in their suitable working style.

Today, I would like to share recent initiatives in Japan for policy reference to "Enhance Women's Inclusion and Economic Empowerment."

First, the Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace went into effect last year. The Act requires large companies and public institutions as employers to recognize and analyze the situation of female employees, and to make and disclose action plans which include numeric targets. In line with the Act, the government is working to visualize the female employees' condition of each employer on the government's websites in comparable formats. By presenting a valuable decision-making resource for investors in capital markets, where Environmental, Social, and corporate Governance (ESG) factors have become increasingly important in recent years, the information will help enhance women's empowerment.

Second, the Japanese government is encouraging the appointment of women as board members. We are currently working with economic organizations and local governments such as Yokohama City where Mayor is Fumiko Hayashi to offer training to help female candidates develop the knowledge and awareness which board members should have, and create a network for promoting the chance for executive appointments.

Third, we believe that the changing of men's awareness and lifestyles is crucial for women's empowerment. Japanese men's participation in housework and childcare, however, falls far short of that of many other economies. Given the conditions, the Japanese government is making active public relations to encourage men to take family responsibility.

Fourth, last year we launched the Shining Women Exchange Project in hopes of galvanizing a grassroots network of women in the Asia-Pacific region. The project brings leading women from Viet Nam and other Asia-Pacific economies to Japan for symposia, which serve to strengthen friendship and trusting relationship among the economies involved.

Next, I would like to touch upon four international measures Japan is taking.

First, we have been working on two projects within APEC to help empower women: the Individual Action Plan for the Enhancement of the Ratio of Women's Representation in Leadership and the APEC Top Management Forum on Diversity Management for Women's Empowerment.

We also hosted a workshop just yesterday as a side event for this year's WEF: a public-private dialogue that included analyses and sharing good practices concerning Individual Action Plans (IAPs) for increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions, speeches and presentations by representatives from both the public and private sectors, and a participant-inclusive discussion. The summary of this workshop will be incorporated into a final report, which will be submitted to the APEC Ministerial Meeting in November.

On October 18, Tokyo will play host to the APEC Gender/Diversity Management Forum. In hopes of establishing a stronger foundation for diversity-oriented management capable of generating corporate value over the mid- to long-term, we will invite corporate executives, investors, and other guests from Japan and other APEC Member economies who are pursuing progressive efforts in diverse management. The Forum will not only propel diversity-oriented management forward but also cultivate a shared awareness of the importance thereof.

Increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions and encouraging the appointment of female executives as well as establishing a broader recognition of the need for diversity-oriented management can have powerful effects on corporate growth—an impact that all APEC member economies can benefit from. We believe solid, consistent progress on these projects will nurture better awareness throughout the APEC and lay the groundwork for further development.

Second, Japan is focusing on working toward Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Last May, headed by Prime Minister Abe, the government established SDGs Promotion Headquarters and formulated a national SDG strategy in December. Representing a cross-sectional value applicable across the board, “Mainstreaming” the goal of gender equality and gender-oriented perspectives is vital to every SDGs. Knowing how crucial it will be to maintain and reflect that stance in every policy effort, we will continue to take the lead in forging both domestic and international initiatives.

Third, in terms of international cooperation, the Japanese government hosted the World Assembly for Women (WAW!) for the third time last December. At the event, Prime Minister Abe announced that Japan will fund initiatives valued at more than 3 billion US dollars in total for women in developing economies over the next three years (through 2018)—and the assistance has been steadily implemented.

Fourth, as part of our effort to empower women economically, we place a substantial emphasis on supporting female entrepreneurs in developing economies. The Japanese government has already announced that it would contribute 50 million US dollars in funding for the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative, which the G20 members agreed to establish at the last summit meeting in Hamburg. Our hope is that, by supporting female entrepreneurs through this Initiative, we can enhance women’s economic empowerment, elevate women’s social status in developing economies, and fuel private-sector development.

I believe that everyone here can empathize with the initiatives Japan has been taking and the thinking behind these initiatives. We will continue to cooperate with APEC member economies, the private sector, civil society and international organizations in various forum including APEC and the UN. We will utilize every opportunity to share our best practices and take initiatives to promote women's empowerment and gender equality.

Thank you for your kind attention.