

APEC Women and the Economy Forum (WEF)
High Level Policy Dialogue (HLPD)
Statement of Mr. Watanabe,
Councillor, Minister's Secretariat, Cabinet Office
September 7th, 2018

Thank you, Honorable, Minister. Soroi Eoe, Minister of Papua New Guinea. I am honored to be here and to be given an opportunity to speak in front of such distinguished representatives.

Japan thinks international cooperation through APEC to encourage women's empowerment is an important mission and has made a lot of contributions. At the same time, Japan has domestically implemented numerous measures to empower women and strengthen their leadership under the firm conviction: "women's empowerment is the center of our growth strategy".

First, as our State Minister explained in the morning session, the new legislation was established this May which aims to promote gender equality effectively and actively in a political field.

Another important issue is promoting more women as executives of listed companies. Following Prime Minister Abe's appeal to Japanese business associations in 2013, the proportion of women among board directors has more than doubled in five years. Listed companies are required to publish the proportion of female board directors in their securities reports. In addition, in response to the voice of some companies that few female candidates were available for appointment as directors, we are providing leadership training for women in partnership.

We are also working to make visible the data on current levels of women's empowerment in companies. Based on the Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace fully enforced in 2016, large companies, national bodies, and local governments are required to

publish details of women's involvement in their organizations, including the rates of female employees newly hired and female managers, as well as the number of women executives. The data is provided in table format on a government website, and made widely available for people to compare companies, and eventually promote voluntary actions of companies.

I believe that a change in men's awareness and behavior is also essential for women's empowerment. Top leaders have a particularly important part to play. In June 2014, a group of male managers who actively support greater participation of women established "Group of Male Leaders Who Will Create a Society in Which Women Shine" and released the Declaration on Action. This group has now grown to encompass a network of more than 180 sympathizers who endorse the idea, and its efforts are spreading throughout the country.

Next, I would like to talk briefly about four points with regard to Japan's international contributions in this field.

First, Japan's two projects in APEC. As for Individual Action Plan for the Enhancement of the Ratio of Women's Representation in Leadership, we hosted a dialogue between the public and private sectors as a side event of PPWE last year and facilitated discussions based on analyses of the IAP and good practices. The IAPs shared by economies on an annual basis show that more measures are taken, and these efforts results in the growing numbers of ratio. We will continue to promote these measures as we move toward 2020, the final year of the project.

Japan also hosted APEC Top Management Forum on Diversity Management for Women's Empowerment last October in Tokyo. Discussions incorporated the perspectives of both companies and investors, and helped to deepen understanding of the importance of diversity management.

We hope that promoting these projects will foster awareness and encourage greater public interest in women's empowerment in APEC.

Second, Japan is prioritizing measures to help us attain the sustainable development goals, or SDGs. This June, Prime Minister Abe announced that the government will prioritize the SDGs as a main pillar of our national strategy and the Expanded SDGs Action Plan 2018 was decided. One of the three pillars of the plan involves empowering the women and future generations who will take the lead in achieving the SDGs. To this end, Japan will bolster its international contributions in the fields of health and education.

Third, one factor that is helping to increase the momentum toward women's empowerment is the World Assembly for Women, WAW, which has been held in Japan every year since 2014. The fifth meeting will be held next March in conjunction with the Women 20 summit in Japan, chair of G20 of next year. While looking back on the results to date, we look forward to this opportunity to debate issues and policies relating to further encouragement of women's empowerment in a changing society.

Fourth, at the G7 Summit held this year, gender issues were incorporated as a cross-cutting subject across the agenda. Prime Minister Abe announced a commitment to contribute 200 million dollars to supporting quality education and human resources development for young girls, adolescent girls, and women in developing countries.

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.