

Statement by Dr. Yoriko Meguro

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At UNESCAP High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional
Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and its regional and global outcomes

Madam Chairperson,

With the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action approaching in 2010, it is valuable that we share information and experiences at the regional level, among the Asia and Pacific countries. We welcome this meeting, and hope that the outcomes of the meeting will contribute to the global review at the Commission on the Status of Women, scheduled for next March.

Madam Chairperson,

Japan has experiences of implementing various measures towards the achievement of Gender Equal Society, currently continuing our comprehensive and systematic efforts in accordance with the Second Basic Plan for Gender Equality, adopted in December 2005. Since we believe that our experiences can provide inputs to other countries in the region, we would like to take this opportunity to introduce some of our key undertakings.

First, to promote the expansion of women's participation in policy decision-making processes, the government of Japan has set a numerical target of increasing the share of women in leadership positions to at least 30% by 2020 in all fields in society. For this purpose, the government promotes efforts designating the three occupations of doctors, researchers and public employees as priority fields in which the participation of women remains low despite high expectations. Moreover, with the aim of achieving economic independence for women who work in local agricultural and marine circles, the government of Japan provides support for new business start-ups, such as processing of local agricultural and marine products and direct marketing to the

consumers.

Secondly, it is important to create environments where both women and men can balance work and family life. Unless a system is built to make a whole society responsible for nursing care, the burden tends to fall on families, especially women. Therefore, Japan introduced the nursing care insurance system in 2000, which covers the entire elderly population in the country. It also needs to be mentioned here that the percentage of female employees taking childcare leave has risen to 90% in 2008, and male employees are also encouraged to take childcare leave,.

In addition, in December 2007, The “Charter for Work-Life Balance” was formulated under the cooperation between the national and local governments, the business community and labour circle, and society-wide efforts are being made for the purpose of promoting work life balance.

Thirdly, poverty and violence against women represent serious problems that must be overcome. Since the issue of poverty, especially of women, is being brought to light by the severe economic situation, researches and investigations have been conducted on the actual situation of men and women facing financial difficulties. The government of Japan is also strengthening measures to prevent spousal violence and to protect and support victims to become self-reliant.

With regards to trafficking in persons, which is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights, the government is striving to prevent and eradicate such acts, and to protect trafficked victims, based on the Action Plan of Measures to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Furthermore, promoting Gender-Equal Society in other countries is an important part of our undertakings. The government therefore, in implementing the Official Development Assistance (ODA), intends to contribute to improving the status of women, through giving full consideration to active participation of women in

development and securing benefits that women should gain from development. Based on the “Initiative on Gender and Development (GAD)” formulated in March 2005, the government is strengthening its efforts to support not only activities in three conventional areas – education, health and participation in economic and social activities – but also activities aimed at gender equality and improving the status of women, respecting the ownership of recipient countries.

Madam Chairperson,

In responding to the economic and social changes that have been occurring both domestically and internationally, the government of Japan is in the process of preparing the Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality, to take further measures to achieve the goal of Gender-Equal Society. Through all these measures, Japan will continue to make more efforts in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action.

Thank you very much.