

ESCAP/Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+30 Review

Item3: RT(d) “Accelerating gender equality through gender-transformative actions that bridge divides and smoothen key transitions”

Country Statement by Ms. OSAKI from the Japanese Delegation

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Japan is facing a demographic transition and it is linked with care economy. Recently, the population shift of young women from rural to urban areas has been accelerating. The reasons are thought to be gender biases and stereotypes that are deeply embedded in families, workplaces, and communities. We would like to share an innovative, multi-stakeholder initiative undertaken by the local government of Toyooka City in Hyogo Prefecture, which is a town in a rural setting with a population of about 76,000, to better respond to the transition.

In 2018, the local government launched an initiative to eliminate gender gaps under the strong leadership of the then Mayor.

First, they established a partnership with the Toyooka Chamber of Commerce and Industry and jointly launched the Work Innovation Promotion Council to transform the culture of local businesses. The Council provides a platform for business owners to learn about how job segregation and gender biases discourage women and helps employers to identify transformative solutions to address structural barriers by changing, for example, performance evaluation and working arrangements. Many companies have seen swift, tangible results, such as a substantial increase in the % of women in managerial and technical positions, as well as the % of men taking parental leave, and so on.

Next, the government started a whole-of-society initiative to transform perceptions of gender roles and norms in the family, community, and school education. They convened a gender-balanced, multi-generational committee, involving stakeholders from businesses, small districts, and education to develop a road map for eliminating gender gaps in 10 years. Thus, the Toyooka City Gender Gap Elimination Strategy was rolled out in 2021 as a 10-year plan. The Strategy was formulated based on thorough gender

analysis of various sex-disaggregated data. Unique initiatives include the production of manga as a tool to raise awareness and candidly talk about gender gaps in Toyooka, and of a communication sheet for couples to discuss the equal sharing of unpaid care work.

In a smaller district, a senior male leader initiated a process to bring together women and men of multiple generations to share experiences of how gender norms have restricted their choices in life and discuss actions to overcome them. The district appointed a woman to a leadership position for the first time. Other districts are following the same path.

This is also a good example of how men leaders can play a role in engaging diverse stakeholders and promoting gender equality as a way of coping with multiple transitions.

I thank you.