

Statement by Ms. Hiroko Hashimoto  
Representative of Japan

At the Fifty-sixth Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

Madam Chairperson,

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude and respect to you, your fellow Bureau members and all those involved for your dedicated efforts in preparing for this meeting.

Madam Chairperson,

Let me begin by expressing our sincere gratitude for the warmhearted support extended by many countries when Japan was hit by the Great East Japan Earthquake just about a year ago on March 11. The devastating earthquake did however bring us an opportunity to renew our appreciation of the power and role of women in disaster risk reduction, response and recovery. With a view to sharing our experiences and lessons learned, and to promote better disaster management in the international community, Japan is sponsoring a new resolution at this fifty-sixth session of CSW on “Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Natural Disaster”. We truly hope that through discussions on this resolution, our common knowledge about this important issue will be deepened, leading to more gender-responsive disaster management in coordination with relevant UN entities including UN Women.

Madam Chairperson,

In January this year, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda stated in his Policy Speech to the Diet that “women’s participation in a variety of settings and the demonstration of their capabilities are a critical key to increasing the diversity of society as a whole and a vibrant Japan”. The “Basic Policy for the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami Reconstruction Efforts” adopted by the government last year clearly stipulates that women’s participation is promoted in all aspects of recovery and that women’s entrepreneurial activities are supported, including the start-up of community-based businesses in rural areas. In recovering from the earthquake, we are in the process of building an inclusive society in which actors including women, children, the elderly and the persons with disabilities actively participate while also emphasizing the promotion of gender equality.

Based on the “Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality” approved by the cabinet in December 2010, Japan is endeavoring to promote gender equality in various fields in society. The details of our intensified efforts on the temporary special measures based on the Basic Plan were reported to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) last year as part of Japan’s follow-up information to the Committee’s concluding observations, and our efforts have been highly evaluated by the Committee.

As for the promotion of gender equality in rural areas, and in agriculture, forestry and fishery sectors, the Basic Law on Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas clearly stipulates that “the State shall promote the creation of an environment in which women’s roles in farming operations are fairly assessed and women can be provided with opportunities to become involved in farm management and other relevant activities at their own initiatives”. It is also one of the priority areas in the Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, after creating a section specializing in gender equality – a ‘Gender Equality Group’ within ‘Women and Elder Affairs Office’, which is placed under ‘Young Farmers and Women Division’ –, is undertaking a comprehensive set of measures toward achieving vibrant rural communities, based on the aforementioned Law and Plan.

First, in order to promote women’s participation in rural policy decision-making processes, specific targets are set for the ratio of female board members of agricultural organizations and committees. To achieve these targets, various awareness-raising activities are conducted every year, including the observation of “Rural Women’s Day” on March 10. Second, in order to advance the economic empowerment of rural women, the government is promoting measures to clearly define the role of women in agricultural management, and is also providing support for activities to intensify and stabilize women’s entrepreneurial activities in the processing and selling of products utilizing local agricultural resources. Third, the government is trying to create a women-friendly rural environment in which women can balance their work and life, through such measures as the promotion of the “family management agreement”, which stipulates management principles for decent work style, division of roles for each member and working environment in each family engaged, especially in agriculture.

Furthermore, I am pleased to introduce to you some of our latest measures in this area. Currently, the government is pursuing the diversification of the management of the

agriculture, forestry and fishery sectors by promoting the integration of production, processing and marketing, and the development of new industries utilizing local resources. Considering that maximizing women's capabilities is critical in this effort, starting this year it will become compulsory to secure at least 30% female membership in the committees responsible for formulating master plans for the local agriculture. A 10% "quota for female entrepreneurs" has also been set in allocating funds for related activities. In addition, the government is intensifying its support for women in rural areas by promoting a women's network at the national and local levels, as well as opportunities for exchanges with women in other sectors.

Madam Chairperson,

Based on the "Initiative on Gender and Development", Japan is integrating a gender perspective into all areas and phases of its official development assistance. A gender aspect is also emphasized in our Global Health Policy 2011-2015 and Education Cooperation Policy 2011-2015, announced at the UN MDGs Summit in September 2010. For assistance in agriculture and rural development sectors, as well as formulating guidelines on gender mainstreaming, gender analysis is conducted prior to the implementation of each project to understand the role, challenges and needs of women in the target area. Based on these policies and measures, Japan continues to provide assistance which contributes to gender equality and the empowerment of women in rural areas. Furthermore, as part of our commitment to promote gender mainstreaming in cooperation with international organizations, the government is currently considering doubling our core contribution to the UN Women for this year.

Madam Chairperson,

Last but not least, I would like to mention that NGOs have been playing an active role in responding to the earthquake, including by providing immediate assistance for the victims, conducting researches and symposiums as well as sharing opinions with the government. With such experience, we renewed our appreciation of the significance of women's participation and the role of civil society. I would like to conclude my statement by expressing our determination to continue to closely cooperate with the international community, international organizations and civil society in our efforts to achieve gender quality and the empowerment of women.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.