

Statement by Dr. Yoriko Meguro
Representative of Japan
At the Fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women
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Madam Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to congratulate you, Madam Chair, and other members of the new Bureau on the assumption of your important roles.

Madam Chair,

On the occasion of the “Beijing + 10” high-level meeting, we reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and pledged to take further steps towards the implementation of those documents.

Encouraging gender equality is an integral part of the structural reform being carried out by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. In this connection, in October of last year, Prime Minister Koizumi appointed Prof. Kuniko Inoguchi, as Minister of State for Gender Equality and Social Affairs, the first ministerial post to deal exclusively with these issues.

As a result of the general election that took place in September 2005, there are now an unprecedented number of female members of the House of Representatives – forty-three (43), an increase by twenty-six (26) percent. While women’s participation in society is growing and more women are involved in decision-making processes, the proportion of the whole they represent remains unsatisfactory. Japan therefore will continue to vigorously promote gender equality and undertake reforms to create a fair society in which both men and women can fully exercise their capacity to achieve self-fulfillment.

One of the specific measures Japan has taken was its revision of the Basic Plan for Gender Equality at the end of last year, taking into account the outcome of the “Beijing + 10”

high-level meeting. The new Second Plan covers comprehensive measures to be implemented before the end of fiscal year 2010, such as setting a numerical target for the percentage of women in managerial positions in every field and applying temporary special measures for attaining those goals, as well as setting an additional numerical target for female scientists, and enhancing measures to support them in their research activities.

Madam Chair,

In this statement, I would like to outline what Japan has achieved and the challenges it faces in the area of gender equality especially with regards to the two themes of the current session of the Commission. Let me turn to the first theme: "Enhanced participation of women in development."

Madam Chair,

At the World Summit 2005, our leaders once again acknowledged the importance of full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, the international community agreed that a common challenge that all the nations of the world face was finding a way to ensure an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, *inter alia*, in the fields of education, health and work. This is certainly a cross-cutting issue.

Madam Chair,

In the field of education, Japan has taken measures to enhance opportunities for women to engage in life-long learning and career training, including providing support for women who, having retired from the workforce once to have a family, wish to undertake a second career, and for those trying to balance their career and the responsibility of raising a family. A particular target has been the enhancement of women's participation in the fields of science and technology. Furthermore, considering the remarkably low proportion of women engaged in research in Japan compared to other countries - only 11.9 percent - , the government has, for the first time, under the initiative of the Minister of State for Gender Equality to work (Ch99) -388.5 -916.5

achieved half a year ahead of schedule.

The level of women's participation in decision-making processes in Japan, however, is still very low. There has been, in general, little improvement at any level, national or local, public or private. It is essential to enhance women's participation in all the areas that touch on daily life, in response to changes that have taken place in socio-economic conditions.

Recognizing these obstacles, the revised Basic Plan for Gender Equality clearly stipulates that greater participation by women is necessary in the fields of environment and disaster prevention and recovery. Moreover, the Plan clarifies the 30 percent target that was set for the proportion of leadership positions women should occupy in all fields of society by 2020. Japan will undertake an initiative to promote the "temporary special measures" defined in its Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society, and will support local governments and private enterprises as they take appropriate measures