

**Statement by Foreign Minister KAMIKAWA Yoko at
the WPS+I Symposium
(November 13, 2023)**

1 Introduction

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to have the opportunity to speak today as the first female Japanese Foreign Minister in about 20 years, here in San Francisco, where women are making remarkable progress in society.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Japan Society of Northern California, the Northern California Asia Society, the U.S.-Japan Council and the Silicon Valley Japan Platform for hosting this WPS+I (Women, Peace, and Security + Innovation) symposium.

Today's theme is "WPS and Innovation," which is a term I think most people may be unfamiliar with.

The concept of "Women, Peace and Security," or

“WPS” was first stipulated in the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 adopted in 2000. It is based on the idea that the equal and full participation of women as decision-makers and actors will lead to more sustainable peace. This idea applies not only in the context of the protection of women and girls in conflict, but also in all stages from conflict prevention to peace processes and post-conflict peacebuilding.

After Resolution 1325, nine related resolutions were also adopted by the Security Council.

These resolutions call for (i) the establishment of effective support mechanisms to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict. (ii) In addition, they call upon Member States to address barriers to women's participation in peace processes and other activities, and confirmed the need for security and judicial authorities to take measures to prevent sexual violence, as well as the importance of a victim and survivor-centered approach and the participation of

multiple stakeholders in conflict prevention. (iii) Moreover, they also call on Member States to integrate the prevention of terrorism and violent extremism into WPS and to strengthen the implementation of the WPS Agenda by prioritizing the participation of women in peace and security activities and decision-making.

When you hear this, you may think WPS is clearly a concept related to conflict and peacebuilding and something remote from you. But let's think about the current dire situation in Ukraine and Gaza and its impact on global economy, including food and energy production.

WPS is an important concept that serves as a steppingstone to bring women's and girls' issues, which had traditionally been discussed as social and economic issues, into the realm of international society and security.

However, in the current era of uncertainty, we

should no longer discuss the economy as "the economy" and peace and stability as "peace and stability," as we have done in the past. We rather discuss the economy, peace, and stability as inseparable issues.

This city is an optimal place to have such discussion. San Francisco is home to thousands of women-owned businesses and is ranked third in the 2023 Dell WE Cities Index for its ability to attract and support high-potential women entrepreneurs. In addition, Stanford University promotes the Gendered Innovation Project and continues to create new innovations. Women's economic empowerment is also a key agenda item at this APEC Ministerial Meeting. With all these backgrounds, I think it is timely to discuss WPS + Innovation here in San Francisco.

Today, I would like to hear ideas from those who are engaged in various economic and innovative activities in this area about the effectiveness and

importance of women's perspectives in dealing with challenges to bring innovation to WPS and to take WPS to the next level.

Even if it seems not to be related to WPS directly, it is still valuable as we may be able to develop new ideas from it. The purpose of this symposium is to share ideas in a process like “brainstorming” to gain insights from your experiences to better incorporate women's perspectives into peace and security.

To that end, I will first explain a few things that might be helpful for the discussion. Then I would like to get your opinions on the panel and deepen the discussion.

2 Sharing Views on WPS

(1) How I have been involved in WPS

Firstly, I would like to take a moment to explain my history with WPS. My first encounter with WPS was before I became Foreign Minister and actually was

here in the United States. The experience to attend the "Women, Peace, and Leadership" symposium as a panelist last year inspired me a lot and I realized the importance of WPS.

Then, I established a parliamentary league on WPS to promote the WPS agenda in Japan. I started to promote this agenda quickly and intensively with my fellow diet members and had a series of dialogues with other countries with advanced initiatives such as the United States. At that time, the concept of WPS was hardly known among Japanese people, especially at the working level, so I have been sharing with the Diet and the government those practices I have learned from other countries.

As a result, WPS was included in our Basic Policies on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform 2023, which serves as a basis for the Japanese budgetary process. Our advocacy also influenced respective ministries such as the Ministry of Defense,

Ministry of Justice, Fire and Disaster Management Agency, National Police Agency, and others to work on identifying WPS focal points to enable interactions with their counterparts abroad.

And now, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, I am promoting WPS even more strongly. I have raised WPS at every opportunity, including during the UN High-Level Week in September, and during my visit to Southeast Asian countries in October.

(2) Utilizing the perspectives of women and youth

Secondly, WPS is not necessarily limited to peacebuilding experts. People from a wider positions can contribute, including perspectives from those working in business and other innovative sectors. We know that the more economically stable a society is, the less likely it is to experience violence and conflict. It has also been found that societies that have achieved higher levels of gender equality and women's participation have higher rates of economic

growth. For example, UN Women reports found that women's exclusion from digitization has massively impacted the GDPs of low- and middle-income countries, to the tune of a loss of \$1 trillion. In addition, involving women in technology can lead to more creative solutions, and a gender-inclusive approach to innovation can raise awareness of women's rights and civic participation. Also, according to McKinsey, closing the gender gap in the workforce and increasing women's leadership could increase global gross domestic product (GDP) by \$28 trillion (26%).

It is often pointed out that measures that do not incorporate the perspectives of women, who make up half of the population, will not be sustainable. In the field of peacebuilding, for example, studies have shown that women's participation in the peace agreement process increases the likelihood of peace lasting more than 15 years by 35%. Japan's third

Action Plan, formulated in April of this year, also emphasizes women's participation and leadership in all its efforts. Let me give you an example of how women's perspectives are actually being utilized. The first and most important mission in demining in conflict areas is to obtain information from women in the area on when and where mines were laid. This is because women who live their daily lives in the area have the most accurate grasp of this information as it is rooted in their daily lives.

(3) Importance of Men's Engagement

Thirdly, I believe these perspectives have been discussed in the business world for some time, but men's engagement is essential for the promotion of WPS and the empowerment of women. For example, in 2014, the United Nations launched the "HeForShe Movement," which aims to engage all people, including men, to become agents of change to realize gender equality. Prime Minister Kishida, as a

HeForShe Champion, is also actively involved in promoting gender equality.

In order to free ourselves from stereotypes about the division of gender roles, it is also important to start by reviewing the roles that men and women have traditionally played. For example, the working environment has changed, and women have become more comfortable working with just a single encouraging word from a male leader, or a change has occurred because male leaders have brought women up to the decision-making level. Japan's WPS Action Plan also mentions the need for men's engagement and calls for strengthening of advocacy for men as an important action. For further diversity, it is also important to incorporate the perspectives of young people.

(4) Responding to Global Issues (e.g., disasters caused by climate change)

Lastly, we must not forget the perspective of

disaster prevention. The West Coast is a natural disaster-prone region. Japan, also a natural disaster-prone country, implements the Action Plan, which includes a commitment to prevent natural disasters and human catastrophes, and to increase leadership roles of women in natural and man-made disaster prevention, mitigation efforts, and decision-making. For example, in 2020, the Cabinet Office established guidelines for the management of evacuation shelters that include a gender perspective and distributed them to local governments. These stipulate that women must be included in the steering committee, toilets and nursing rooms must be provided based on women's needs, and evacuation centers must be operated in such a way that women are not subject to sexual harassment. Efforts are also being made to increase the number of women on local disaster management committees.

With natural disasters occurring frequently

around the world, it is critical to incorporate the WPS agenda in the areas of disaster response, prevention and mitigation, and the participation and leadership of women in the process is essential. While government must of course take the lead in disaster prevention and response, I would appreciate your views on what roles can the business community and individuals could play in this process.

3 Conclusion

I believe that the solution to social problems requires business participation, innovative thinking and respect for diversity. What can be done to further promote WPS and to achieve more resilient economic and social development? In the following panel discussion, we would like to invite your fresh and creative ideas and create a time where we can "inspire each other." We would also like to bring together all your ideas to innovate the WPS agenda.

Thank you very much for your attention.