

Statement by Mr. Motome TAKISAWA,
Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan
at the ASEM Conference on Women's Economic
Empowerment on 25-26 May 2017 in Vilnius, Lithuania

Distinguished Participants,

(Opening Remarks)

- I would first like to express my sincere appreciation to H.E.Mr. Linas LINKEVIČIUS, Minister for Foreign Affairs, H.E.Mr. Linas KUKURAITIS, Minister of Social Security and Labour, and all other relevant stakeholders including from the Lithuanian Government, for kindly hosting this ASEM Conference on Women's Economic Empowerment.

(ASEM)

- Women's Economic Empowerment is one of the policies Japan considers the most important, as a common effort of the international community bringing vitality to our society. Based on the mutual respect and spirit of equality, the ASEM continues to develop with its three pillars, namely politics, economy and culture and society, and it celebrated its 20th anniversary last year. As we stand at the milestone year of 2017 with a new decade coming up, I believe it is important for the ASEM to deliver a far-seeing strong message on women's policy to the international community.

Distinguished guests,

(Women's Policy)

- It is one of Japan's priority issues to realize a society where all women can play active roles and, in recent years, Japan has implemented various policies to this end. As a result, in last 4 years under the Abe administration, the number of working women has increased by about 1.5 million, the rate of women who continue to work after the first birth of child has exceeded 50% for the first time, and the number of female executives of listed companies has doubled. We will continue to engage actively in the realization of the society where women can play more active roles. To this end, work style reform is a priority issue, especially changing the habit of long work hours and realizing equal pay for equal work. We plan to submit related bills to the Diet at an early date. In addition, we will take various measures such as increasing the capacity of childcare facilities, scaling up of recurrent education for women who left their jobs for reasons such as childbirth or child rearing so that they can get their job again, and fostering of women's leadership.
- From a global perspective, women's empowerment is an important task to be carried out by both developed and developing countries. In order to achieve the SDGs, Japan is committed to make contribution in both categories of countries. Prime Minister Abe announced Japan's decision to implement over 3 billion US dollars for 3 years between 2016 and 2018 in cooperation for the rights of women and girl, the building of the capacity of women and girls to reach their full potential, and the advancement of women's leadership in developing countries.

- Moreover, Japan will promote the discussion in the ASEM in order to learn from the experiences of other countries about promoting women's success in Japan.

In this meeting, as a gender expert, Ms. Osaki Asako, visiting professor of Kwansei Gakuin University, and active participants in the World Assembly for Women called WAW ! hosted by Japan, will make a speech about women's economic empowerment in rural areas of Japan. I hope there will be active discussions.

(Concluding Remarks)

- In conclusion, Japan places importance to the ASEM which has been contributing to the strengthening of the cooperation between the further growing Asia and further maturing Europe. The ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting will be held in Myanmar in November this year.

Not only in today's Conference, but also at such ministerial level, Japan hopes active discussion will take place on women's empowerment and a future direction will be presented looking the two decades ahead. Japan spares no effort to this end.

Thank you for your kind attention.

(END)