**Commission on the Status of Women**

**Japan**

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**Topic 1: Women and Sustainability**

As we ride on the momentum of the 21st century it has become resoundingly obvious that women – the makeup of half of 7.4 billion people on Earth – are an instrumental and ineluctable group of our global community’s social construct. Women are the stronghold of our families and our communities – the very sustenance of our world as a whole. As a member of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women with a permanent mission for gender equality, Japan continues to vigorously promote gender equality in all fields. Approved by our cabinet in 2010, Japan has formulated and passed the *Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality*, by which we loyally abide and see as the epicentre of our policy-making to ensure the materialization of a gender-equal society.

Women and girls often carry the burden of day-to-day family subsistence, through daily endeavors of walking miles for water, resource collection, agricultural activities, and farm maintenance. The daily practice of travelling superior distances to obtain drinkable water places paramount pressure on women, often impeding them from receiving education and income-generating positions, tightly correlating them to poverty. Environmental degradation further disproportionately adds to the grievances of women and girls, subjecting them to higher levels of health hazards due to motherhood and menstruation. Women and the Environment was identified as one of the 12 critical areas of concern at the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995. Japan earnestly aligns itself with the ideals and foundational principles relating to gender equality as outlined by the Beijing Platform for Action and will further enhance its efforts to implement the solutions adopted by global leaders at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing into the fabric of daily life. In order to achieve gender equality as a global community, Japan believes that close operational relationships must be developed and maintained with a wide range of stakeholders, including international organizations and NGOs. Bearing that sentiment in mind, Japan believes international cooperation is at the core of our common vision of the world. Japan will advocate for progressive diplomatic solutions to current gender-exclusive barriers and eagerly awaits the opportunity to work collaboratively with other member states to realize a true gender-equal society.

Japan constantly strives to become a global leader in gender mainstreaming and placing women in positions of authority, especially those that most directly affect them and their families. Women are the mainstay of small-scale agriculture, land cultivation, and community livelihood but nonetheless face substantial barriers to accessing resources and productivity enhancing services. Furthermore, a lack of gender desegregated data exacerbates a general lack of understanding surrounding roles in agriculture, but it is exactly this sort of assessment that is crucial in ensuring female participation in rural development. Japan has been a proactive actor in this regard, introducing the *Basic Law on Food, Agriculture, and Rural Areas* in 1999. Under Article 26, the act clearly stipulates that there must be a creation of an environment in which women’s roles in farming are clearly assessed and women can be provided opportunities to become involved in farm management and other relevant activities at their own initiative. Japan is fully committed to its belief that women must gain access to labour-saving technology and must also be given the legitimacy they deserve as pillars of their families. This includes land ownership rights, credits, and more income-generating opportunities. Japan will be looking to develop comprehensive solutions for more authoritative female roles in rural development, considering their critical contributions to these fields.

**Topic 2: Elimination of Gender-Based Violence**

A priority theme of our committee and a common euphoric vision that is universally held by those who dream of a gender-equal society is that of eliminating violence against women and girls. An issue that plagues hundreds of millions of women around the world, both in developed and developing regions, Japan remains actively seized on this issue and will continue to actively participate in initiatives that secure human rights, which are inherently and undoubtedly women’s rights. First and foremost, the Japanese government firmly believes that the elimination of gender-based violence is an obligation of the entire global community and is also a pressing issue faced by the global community. Therefore, Japan sees international cooperation on this matter as pertinent to realizing our common goal of gender equality and the security of women.

UNICEF has projected that 48% of females in South Asian countries are married under the age of 18– an immense number that Japan sees as unacceptable. Forced marriages are heightened by the presence of bride kidnapping, a rampant issue in African nations and Kyrgyzstan, as well as traditional practices and socioeconomic factors. As this issue is most prevalent in developing regions in the world, forced marriages – closely tied to child marriages – are directly related to poverty and cultural biases, which Japan believes must be promptly addressed in order to eradicate these unethical and unlawful practices. As a nation built on a foundation of tradition and culture, but even more so centered on ethics and morality, Japan is a firm believer in increasing the number of accessible educational facilities in the affected regions. Education of both girls and their families and communities are essential to establishing common understanding of the rights of women and a collective responsibility to respect those rights.

Marital violence is an issue that the government of Japan has taken a wide range of efforts in tackling. As an unbridled issue in all levels of society, violence in intimate relationships is one of the leading causes of violence against women. In 2001 Japan passed a comprehensive act, *The Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence*, dedicated explicitly to protecting and providing assistance to victims of domestic violence. Under Article 2 of the act, the Japanese government commits to providing protection for victims of domestic violence, as well as equipping victims with the resources and skills necessary for self-reliance. Furthermore, Article 3 prescribes the duty of the government to provide safety to victims of violence in emergencies and provide temporary protection for victims.

In addition to our comprehensive domestic efforts, Japan will continue to provide assistance to the UN Trust Fund for Human Security and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.

**Topic 3: Women in Education and Employment**

The education of women and girls is at the very core of sustainable global development and is even more closely related to breaking free from cycles of extreme poverty in many regions in the world. Access to education is a basic human right, as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 and the right to education is further enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Despite such seemingly obvious conclusions regarding the right of females to access education, women and girls all around the world face severe barriers – cultural, social, and economic – to obtaining adequate education. Japan actively promotes the lifelong learning and capacity building of women, including career training as a means of eliminating gender-based discrimination. Japan sees it as inherent that women are able to assess their own abilities and aptitudes to actively choose their paths to livelihoods and meaningful professional positions.

UNESCO estimates that out of the 774 million people in the world who are illiterate, two thirds of them are female. According to UNICEF, approximately 31 million primary school aged girls were out of school in 2013. It is highly likely that the majority of those girls will never return to school again. Hindrances to females from obtaining education are largely due to poverty, social and cultural barriers, and economic conditions. Females have been long placed at a disadvantage against males, with families giving precedence to male children and employing females in manual labour in order to sustain the finances of the household. These obstructions to liberty for females are interlinked with underlying traditional perceptions of gender roles, which Japan is vigorously working to dispel as we carry out comprehensive domestic policies to eliminate gender-based discrimination. Japan stands firm in its view that the education of females positively affects all demographic groups, especially those in developing regions. It has been studied that the education of females leads to a decrease in underage/forced marriages, early pregnancies, and spread of disease such as HIV/AIDS. Women who are educated are more likely than not to become proactive advocates of equality in their communities and are much more likely to send their own children to school, which will undoubtedly break cycles of extreme poverty as generations of people will be given vocational skills training.

Workplace inequality is another pressing issue that Japan itself has had its fair share of, and is yet another issue that carries extensive global reach, infiltrating all levels of society. In a 2015 American study, it was found that among full-time female employees and full-time male employees, the gender pay gap was 20% - a number which by no doubt would be even greater in developing regions of our world. Only half of women are actively participating in the workforce; that is half, hundreds of millions of people whose potential is not being met and whose adept skills are not being counted into our human capital. Domestically, heightened tensions and pressure in the workplace often aggravate mistreatment of female employees and our female employees are often discouraged to take maternal leave. In response to these urgent issues, Japan formulated the *Charter for Work-Life Balance* in 2007 to ensure that women are able to maintain valuable professional occupations as well as meet their familial obligations. Through the charter, Japan has been strongly pushing for shortened work hours and we have been promoting the use of flexible work hours. Japan also believes that standardized employer-employee relations and policies are crucial to achieving gender equality in the workplace and is the primary reason why Japan has also adopted the *Child Care and Family Leave Act*. Under this act, the Japanese government has taken legal measures to ensure that both parents are able to take paid child care leave, and further makes it easier for the father to take such leaves. By implementing these policies, Japan is optimistic that real results and decreases in female mistreatment in the work force occur.

As a dedicated member state of the Commission on the Status of Women, Japan will staunchly abide by its goal of empowering women and eradicating society of gender-based violence and discrimination. Japan vies to become a global example of gender equality in society and will continue to actively participate with other nations as well as international non-governmental actors to aid all women on their road to liberty, security, and equality.

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