

**Responses to the Questionnaire to Governments
on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action
and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session
of the General Assembly**

JAPAN

Part One: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

The Second Basic Plan for Gender Equality that was approved by the Cabinet on December 27, 2005, lays out 12 important fields and also set the long-term policy direction until 2020. It also includes concrete measures that are to be implemented by the end of FY2010. In particular, the Basic Plan establishes a numeric target to promote the expansion of women's participation in policy decision-making processes, that is, "to expand women's participation in every field so that women will have at least 30% of the leadership positions in all fields of society by 2020," and promotes the efforts.

Since the Basic Plan was formulated, a review of the legal system and the planning and implementation of new measures have been promoted in each field with the aim of realizing a gender-equal society.

In order to promote the expansion of women's participation in policy decision-making processes, various targets have been established including the following: in 2004 a target was established to increase the ratio of women recruited who passed the Level I recruitment examination for national public employees to approximately 30% by around FY2010; in 2006 a target was set to increase the ratio of female members in national advisory councils to 33.3% by the end of FY2010, and to ensure that by 2020 either male or female membership of such bodies does not fall below 40% of total membership. In addition, based on the recognition that more strategic measures are necessary to expand the participation of women, the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality adopted the Program for Accelerating Women's Social Participation in April 2008.

In the field of employment, the Act on Securing, Etc. of Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women in Employment was revised in 2006 to prohibit discrimination against both men and women and to prohibit dismissal or other disadvantageous treatment due to reasons such as pregnancy and childbirth. In 2007, the Law Concerning the Improvement of Employment Management of Part-time Workers was revised to ensure the balanced treatment of part-time workers and regular employees according to their actual working styles and to encourage the conversion of part-time workers to regular employees. This Law was revised with the aim of creating a work environment in which part-time workers can effectively make use of their capabilities. In 2005 the Plan of Support for Women's Renewed Challenge was adopted, which sets out concrete measures such as creation of a local environment in which women can engage in new challenges, support for learning and skills development, support for re-employment, support for starting of new businesses and promotion of social participation, as well as provision of comprehensive information and implementation of surveys by the government. Under this Plan, which was revised in 2006, comprehensive support is provided to women who resume their careers or start new businesses.

In 2007, the Charter for Work-Life Balance, the Action Policy for Promoting Work-Life Balance, and "Japan's Strategy to Support Children and Family" were adopted with the aim of promoting efforts by the government and the private sector to provide support to both women and men so that they can balance work and family/community life and to support the development of the next generation.

Regarding the elimination of all forms of violence against women, the Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims was revised in 2007, and in 2008 the Basic Policy were revised pursuant to the enforcement of the revised Act. Enhanced measures were implemented to prevent spousal violence and to protect victims while also providing support to assist victims in

becoming self-reliant.

As part of measures for the prevention and eradication of trafficking in persons and for the protection of trafficked persons, the Inter-Ministerial Liaison Committee regarding measures to combat trafficking in persons was formulated in 2004 and the Action Plan of Measures to Combat Trafficking in Persons was created. In 2005, the Law Concerning Partial Amendment to the Penal Code was enacted as legislation to ensure that people involved in trafficking in persons are severely punished. It includes the establishment of trafficking in persons as a crime and measures for dealing with cross-border trafficking in persons.

The measures set forth in the Basic Plan have been steadily promoted by each ministry through the enrichment of the legal system and the implementation of the policy measures described above. In March 2008, three years after the adoption of the Plan, the Council for Gender Equality summarized and published an interim report on the implementation status of the measures, related statistical data, and future challenges in order to assist in the comprehension of the status of efforts regarding the current implementation of the Plan and the implementation schedule, etc. Based on this report, the above-mentioned Program for Accelerating Women's Social Participation was adopted and efforts for the substantial realization of gender equality are now being promoted. In addition, among these efforts the following points were identified as requiring particular attention on the whole when advancing with efforts in all fields.

1. It is important to formulate and implement related measures from gender perspectives in all fields and in so doing aim for the realization of gender equality. In particular it is hoped that in the future this point will be duly noted in various fields in which gender perspectives have not been integrated to date. Particularly, in this point of view, monitoring and gender impact assessment and evaluation functions should be strengthened to ensure that all measures can be appraised systematically and substantively.
2. A positive development is that the number of women is gradually increasing who are active in various fields that to date have been mainly the preserve of men. However, the response to the goal of "expanding women's participation in every field so that women will have at least 30% of the leadership positions in all fields of society by 2020" has to date only been moderate in terms of women's expanded participation, and the proportion of women who are active in various fields in society remains at a low level by international comparisons. Accordingly, in addition to advancing strategically and effectively measures to call on top-level management in every sector of society and support the creation of networks to promote women's empowerment, it is also necessary to implement specific and strategic measures that focus in particular on fields in which women's participation is expected but progress has been slow. In these ways it is necessary to thus accelerate women's participation.
3. Since the significance of gender equality for men, including through various measures relating to work-life balance and efforts in local communities, has been increasing in recent years, it is important to bear in mind the enhancement of men's understanding about the significance of gender equality when promoting measures in each field.
4. Given the reality that data and other status information that form the basis for advancing measures are not necessarily clear, including the current status and challenges of gender equality, such as the status of women's participation in each field, it is important to promote efforts among private sector organizations and others to understand the current status in each field.
5. In addition to efforts by the national government, it is important that the local governments also

make efforts to maintain and enhance organizations for promotion and steadily promote related measures. For this there should be greater cooperation and collaboration between the central and local governments.

Part 2: Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

A. Women and poverty

(1) Enhancement support for single-mother households

With regard to mothers of single-mother households, etc., based on the Law for the Welfare of Mothers with Dependents and Widows, the government is developing comprehensive measures that are aimed at supporting single-mothers and enabling them to become self-reliant. These measures include support for child-rearing and daily living, support for finding employment, securing childcare costs through the establishment of childcare costs consultation centers, etc., and economic support such as the provision of child rearing allowances, and enhancement of the Mothers with Dependents and Widows Loan Fund.

Since July 2008, the Specialist Committee on Monitoring and Gender Impact Assessment and Evaluation of the Council for Gender Equality has been deliberating the theme of “Women and men experiencing difficulties in daily lives in the midst of new trends in economy and society.” Given the great changes occurring in the current economic and social environment, the Committee has researched the ever increasing diversification and seriousness of the circumstances that face various people experiencing difficulties in daily life, including single-parent homes (encompassing single-mother households), victims of domestic violence, unstable employment, and foreigners living in Japan. The Committee is considering measures that would support such people in difficulties and would support their social participation and self-reliance.

The “Policy Package to Address Economic Crisis” approved by the government and the ruling coalition parties in April 2009, includes measures to support single mothers in acquiring qualifications and support for working from home, as part of efforts designed to enhance support to single-parent households.

(2) Income guarantees for the elderly

The Act Partially Revising the National Pension Act was enacted in June 2004, and this revision stipulates the division of employee’s pension at the time of divorce, among other provisions.

(3) Promotion of efforts based on the Gender and Development (GAD) Initiative

With regard to the government’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) policy, the ODA Charter that was revised in August 2003 provides the assurance of fairness as one of its basic policies, and stipulates the following: “In particular, the perspective of gender equality is important. Japan will make further efforts to improve the status of women, giving full consideration to the active participation of women in development, and to ensuring that women reap benefits from development.” In March 2005, the Gender and Development (GAD) Initiative was newly formulated by drastically overhauling the Initiative on Women in Development (WID) in order to make even more effective effort to promote gender equality in development. Herewith, the government is strengthening not only the assistance targeted at women focusing on three priority areas such as education, health and participation in economic social activities, but also the assistance to improve gender equality and status of women, respecting the ownership of the developing countries.

As part of the efforts to improve understanding of GAD and raise more awareness, the government is implementing the activities for “gender mainstreaming” including the utilization of “gender focal points” appointed in 89 ODA recipient countries. Since FY2005, the gender focal points have gathered instructive examples of good practices or lessons learned from examples where

insufficient attention has been given to gender perspectives. This information is then shared as part of efforts towards “gender mainstreaming”

B Education and training of women

(1) Promotion of women’s skills development

The government is implementing lectures and courses in convenient locations for women who have left employment for childbirth and child-rearing, on such topics as IT and communication skills. In this way the government is providing learning opportunities to women who seek to make a renewed challenge in the workplace.

In addition, the government is providing support to universities, junior colleges, specialized vocational high schools and specialized training colleges that are utilizing their education and research resources and vocational training skills, and, in cooperation with industry and related organizations, are working to develop and implement specialized and practical education programs that respond to the needs of people in society (including women who have broken off their careers for child-rearing) who seek to challenge themselves in new areas. In this way opportunities to learn new skills are being enhanced.

(2) Enhancement of programs at the National Women’s Education Center (NVEC)

The National Women’s Education Center (NVEC) is the only national center in Japan working to vitalize women’s education that will promote the formation of a gender-equal society.

In order to further enhance the provision of information about the empowerment of women, the “Women’s Information Portal ‘Winet’” was launched in FY2006 as a comprehensive portal for information for and about women (<http://winet.nwec.jp/>).

In addition, the Women’s Archives Center was opened at NVEC, in June 2008, with the aim of collecting, organizing, storing and providing historical materials pertaining to women who have made a particular impact in vitalizing women’s education and in the formation of a gender-equal society, and about administrative policies and measures on women’s education and gender equality. In October of the same year, the Women’s Digital Archive System (<http://w-archive.nwec.jp/>) was constructed, which catalogues the contents of the Women’s Archives Center and features digitized images of part of the archived materials.

(3) Enhancement of academic and career guidance

The government endeavors to enlighten female students, including those from university and high school, and enable them to make appropriate career choices by posting information on websites related to positive action and through holding awareness raising seminars and other events.

C Women and health

(1) Support lifelong health for women

The “Study Group on Women’s Health Promotion” which was established in December 2007 by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, engages in research into the status of women’s health and deliberates lifelong women’s health management issues. In addition, the ministry designated the days from March 1 to 8 each year as “Women’s Health Week” and various awareness raising programs are being implemented.

(2) Promotion of measures for early detection of uterine and breast cancers and prevention of osteoporosis

Based on the Cancer Control Act that was enacted in June 2006, the government formulated the Basic Plan to Promote Cancer Control, which was approved by the Cabinet in June 2007. Based on

this Basic Plan, with regard to breast cancer, which is on a rising annual trend and is the cancer with the greatest prevalence among women, and also uterine cancer, which it has been pointed out is occurring increasingly among younger people, the government is making efforts to achieve early detection and reduce the mortality rate, through the promotion of uniform oncological medical care and cancer screenings.

In addition, with regard to osteoporosis, based on the provisions of the Health Promotion Law, checkups for osteoporosis is being implemented for women at 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65 and 70 years of age in municipalities around Japan (including special wards) with the aim of detecting decreased bone mass at an early stage and taking preventive measures.

(3) Support for women's health in pregnancy and childbirth

The government is promoting the development of specialist infertility counseling centers as a means of providing broad-based consultation and information services about infertility, to enable people who would like to have children but have been unable to conceive to have the opportunity to make an independent informed decision based on correct and appropriate basic information. In addition, surveys and research into treatment for infertility are being advanced. Partial support for the costs of infertility treatment for spouses is also being provided to defray the large cost of this type of treatment.

Furthermore, in order to ensure that advanced medical treatment is appropriately provided during the high-risk pregnancy and child-birth periods and for newborns, in all prefectures of Japan the government is promoting the implementation of the Perinatal Medical Network Project with the aim of developing comprehensive perinatal mother-and-child medical centers that will form the core for perinatal medical services, and also ensuring that a cooperative structure is in place between local medical facilities and high-level medical facilities.

(4) Promotion of health and welfare measures for the elderly

It is now nine years since the nursing care insurance system was enacted in April 2000, and it has gradually become established as a system that supports the lives of elderly people in Japan. At the same time, in order to ensure the sustainability of the system in the midst of an increasingly aging society and to create a system capable of responding to new challenges, including the increasing number of elderly persons suffering from dementia, the government conducted a comprehensive review of the entire nursing care insurance system, and since FY2006, projects to prevent the need for nursing care have been implemented, focusing on persons who are likely to need nursing care or similar support.

D Violence against women

(1) Promotion of the prevention of spousal violence and protection for victims

1) Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims and Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Centers

In accordance with the Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims active, efforts are being made to promote measures to prevent spousal violence and protect victims. In January 2008, the Act to Partially Revise the Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims was enacted, and the revisions contain new provisions, such as the enhancement of the protection order system to include an order prohibiting phone calls or other behavior, and an order prohibiting approach to the victim's relatives, etc., as well as making it obligatory for municipalities to make efforts to establish Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Centers.

Based on the Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims, Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Centers have been established in 180 locations (as of April 2008), and these centers offer such services as advice, temporary protection and support for victims to become self-reliant.

2) Enhancement of the consultation structure

Since FY2006, attorneys have provided legal advice and coordination for victims on issues such as divorce and residence status, etc. at the Women's Consulting Office, one of the facilities functioning as Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Centers.

In order to further promote public-private cooperation in the prevention of spousal violence and the protection and support for self-reliance of victims, the government convened a national meeting in September 2008, at which practitioners from the public and private sectors gathered to share advanced examples of good practices and other information.

Furthermore, for victims of spousal violence who do not know where they can go to receive consultation and support, the "Telephone Guidance Service on Organizations Offering Consultation to Spousal Violence Victims (abbreviation: The DV Consultation Navi)" was launched in January 2009, which provides pre-recorded advice about consultation services and the Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Center closest to the victim.

3) Protection of victims and support for self-reliance

In FY2007, the government initiated a project to enable victims to secure a guarantor, so that when they leave the Women's Protection Facility they do not experience difficulties in finding a guarantor for the purposes of finding employment or renting an apartment. In FY2008, the temporary protection costs for victims at Women's Consulting Offices were enhanced, and in FY2009, a training scheme for specialized interpreters to assist foreign victims of violence was initiated. In this way a number of measures have been taken to strengthen the protection and improve self-reliance of victims.

In case of an application for permission to extend the period of stay or change the status of residence from a foreigner who is separated from her spouse or has been divorced because of the spousal violence, the permission is to be granted taking individual circumstances into consideration. Additionally, in the case in which the foreign victim of violence is subject to a deportation procedure, a judgment is to be made to grant special permission taking individual circumstances into consideration to remain in Japan from the perspective of granting the victim a stable legal position.

For the purpose of supporting the self-reliance of victims, program proposals are being prepared and implemented on a pilot basis to provide living accommodation to victims and their children who are living in local areas. In order to expand such programs to other local areas, the results of the pilot programs are being gathered and compiled.

(2) Promotion of measures against sex crimes

1) Strict response to sex crimes

The Act to Partially Revise the Penal Code, which was enacted in January 2005, raised the statutory penalty for rape and other crimes in addition to stipulating newly a heavier penalty than ordinary crime of rape in cases when two or more persons jointly commit rape.

2) Consideration for victims

The police use public funds to cover the costs accruing to female victims of sex crimes, including

fees for initial visit to a physician, medical certificate, emergency contraceptive measures, and investigation costs arising due to the crime. In this way efforts are made to reduce the economic burden on victims.

The “Act on Partial Amendment of the Code of Criminal Procedures and Other Related Acts to Protect the Rights and Benefits of Crime Victims and their Families,” enforced in December 2007, allows the court to decide that the names and other information about victims of specific types of crime such as a sexual crime should not be disclosed at a public trial when deemed appropriate. In such a case, judicial proceedings can be taken without disclosure of personal information about the victim. Moreover, the Act allows the prosecutor to request that the defense attorney take measures to prevent others from knowing the names and other information about a victim when it is deemed that the victim’s dignity could be damaged if the information were revealed through the process of disclosure of evidence. As such, The Act has contributed to the protection of information about victims in criminal procedures.

3) Promotion of measures against the perpetrators of violence

Since FY2006, the government has been implementing treatment programs for sex offenders at designated penal institutions and all probation offices.

(3) Promotion of measures against the trafficking in persons

1) Active promotion of the National Action Plan of Measures to Combat Trafficking in Persons

In accordance with the National Action Plan of Measures to Combat Trafficking in Persons that was approved in December 2004 with a central focus of preventing and eliminating trafficking in persons and protecting the victims of trafficking, the government is advancing related measures. Japan has sent governmental delegations to Thailand, the Philippines, Colombia, Russia, Romania, Ukraine, Indonesia, Cambodia and Laos, among others, as a means of promoting cooperation with governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) alike. In addition, the government is making active efforts to provide international support, including participating in international conferences on trafficking and also in regional meetings, etc.

2) Appropriate application of related laws and ordinances

In June 2005, the Diet approved the ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. In addition, as part of efforts to develop legislation to deal with crimes of human trafficking and other infringements of personal liberty, the Law Concerning Amendment to the Penal Code, including the establishment of legal penalties for the crime of buying or selling human beings, was approved unanimously by the Diet and enacted. .

In June 2005, the government also implemented amendments to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, which include establishing a definition of trafficking in persons; clarifying that victims of trafficking are eligible to be granted special landing or residence permission; excluding victims of trafficking from deportation for reason of prostitution or activities other than those permitted under the previously granted status of residence; and making the perpetrators of trafficking in persons subject to denial of landing permission and deportation. These amendments came into force in July 2005. Over the four-year period from 2005 to 2008, special residence permission was granted to a total of 104 foreign women who were the victims of trafficking and in violation of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act.

In order to improve the situation in which foreign women who are the victims of trafficking are exploited by being coerced into prostitution and other acts in the entertainment business or

sex-related industry, the Act Partially Amending the Law on Control and Improvement of Amusement Business was enacted in November 2005. The amendments to this law include adding the crime of buying or selling human beings as a reason for denying a license for operating an entertainment business; and also make it obligatory for proprietors of entertainment restaurants and bars to confirm the date of birth, nationality and authorized status of residence of their employees. This amended law came into force in May 2006.

3) Promotion of appropriate treatment from the standpoint of victims

In order to enhance protection for victims of trafficking, since FY2006, the government has been providing support for medical costs (limited to cases in which other legal structures cannot be utilized) for victims of trafficking under the protection of Women's Consulting Offices.

In order to provide early protection to women and children who are victims of crimes that are detrimental to the welfare of minors and those who are the victims of trafficking, since October 2007, private organizations have been entrusted by the National Police Agency with a project in which citizens can provide notification about crimes anonymously by telephone, and this information is then passed on to the police to assist in investigations.

The government began contributing to the Voluntary Return and Reintegration Assistance to Trafficked Victims in Japan, a project of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in FY2005 in order to support the safe return home and social reintegration in their home countries of foreign victims of trafficking. As of the end of December 2008, the IOM has provided return assistance to 144 victims who wished to return to their home countries and also provided support to facilitate their reintegration in society.

E Women and armed conflict

Considering that it is women and children who need the greatest support in armed conflicts, Japan has been promoting the concept of "human security," which focuses on their protection and empowerment, and is implementing assistance to this end. Moreover, under the recognition that international organizations play an important role in promoting peace, Japan provides multilateral aid through international organizations in addition to bilateral aid. For example, Japan has been actively cooperating with international humanitarian organizations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Furthermore, Japan supported the project on promoting social reintegration of internally displaced persons and refugee women executed by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in Afghanistan through the Trust Fund for Human Security established by Japan in the United Nations.

F Women and the economy

(1) Securing equal opportunities and treatment for women and men in the field of employment

In order to further promote equal opportunities for women and men in employment, the Act on Securing, Etc. of Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women in Employment and the Labor Standards Act were revised in 2006 and came into force in April 2007. These amendments clarify and add employment stages in which discrimination or discriminatory practices against men or women are banned, and in addition they: expand the scope for prohibition of sex discrimination, including indirect discrimination; prohibit dismissal or other disadvantageous treatment due to reasons such as pregnancy and childbirth; oblige employers to implement necessary measures to prevent sexual harassment; and relax regulations regarding underground work done by women.

(2) Support for reemployment

For persons who have left employment to engage in child-rearing or nursing care, etc., but seek to return to employment in the future, the government is implementing a variety of assistance, including the implementation of seminars and the provision of information. In addition, since FY2004, finely tailored support to enable people to take action in a planned and systematic way towards reemployment has been implemented, including consultations being provided by career consultants. Moreover, comprehensive information is being provided through the internet regarding preparations for reemployment and also childcare and nursing care services that would be useful for balancing work and life.

In addition, in FY2006 the government established public employment security offices, called "Mother's Hello Work," for persons seeking to reenter employment while child-rearing. These offices provide comprehensive and integrated employment support, including the establishment of an environment in which it is easy for mothers to bring their children to the employment security office, through the setting up of "kids' corners," as well as the provision of employment consultations by appointment, the provision of information on childcare facilities, etc., and the provision of information on job openings where it would be easy for a mother to balance work and child-rearing.

(3) Promotion of comprehensive measures for part-time workers

In order to develop an employment environment in which part-time workers can exercise their abilities more effectively, Law to Amend the Law Concerning the Improvement of Employment Management of Part-time Workers came into force in April 2008. The amended law provides measures to ensure equitable treatment with regular workers according to the reality of working styles, and promote the shift of part-time workers to become regular workers.

(4) Support for female entrepreneurs

In order to support female entrepreneurs, the government is implementing a project to introduce women with little entrepreneurial experience to mentors who can provide advice on management know-how and other matters. Moreover, a dedicated website was launched in June 2007 that provides various information on entrepreneurship.

(5) Support the efforts of men and women to harmonize work with family and community life

1) Promotion of awareness on balancing work and family life

In December 2007, the Council of Executives of Public and Private Sectors to Promote Work-Life Balance, which is composed of related ministers and representatives from economic and labor circles and local authorities, formulated the Charter for Work-Life Balance and the Action Policy for the Promotion of Work-Life Balance. The Charter sets out the basic concept of work-life balance, stating why it is important and what such a balanced society should look like and what role people involved should play. The Action Policy covers the specific efforts and policy guidelines of the national government, local authorities and corporations, and sets out 14 numeric targets for society as a whole, including employment rates by age bracket, the percentage of paid annual leave that is used by workers each year, and the percentage of women who continue to work before and after the birth of their first child.

The government is actively implementing awareness raising measures about providing employment environments which make it easier for people to balance work and family life. In 2009, with the aim of transforming people's awareness about the situation surrounding men at work and in the home, the government collected and compiled the experiences of men who have taken or are taking child care leave and made them widely known as practical examples of the process from taking childcare leave to returning to work, as well as made a handbook to raise awareness about

boosting the number of men taking such leave and promoting a balanced lifestyle between work and childcare for men.

2) Promotion of firm establishment and enhancement of systems to balance work and childcare and family care

In addition to boosting awareness of the stipulations in the Act on Child Care and Family Care Leave, including measures such as childcare leave, family care leave, child nursing leave system, system to limit out of hours work, system to limit late-night work, and shortened working hours, etc., the government is also implementing administrative guidance to ensure that these systems are being properly disseminated and becoming established in society, including planned visits to offices to check that the systems required by regulations are being properly implemented.

These efforts are having a steady effect in establishing the systems of childcare care leave in society, evidenced by the fact that the rate of women taking childcare leave in FY2007 reached approximately 90%. However, the reality is that approximately 70% of women still leave the workplace around the time of the birth of their first child, and the proportion of men taking childcare leave stand at only 1.56%.

Based on this situation, from August 2008, in order to further promote support for balancing work and family life, the Panel on Equal Employment Opportunity Policies of the Labour Policy Council deliberated a revision to the Child Care and Family Care Leave, and in December 2008 the Council submitted a proposal. The proposal contains a number of recommendations, including (i) making it obligatory to create a shortened hours working system and exempt workers from unscheduled working hours; (ii) extending the period it is possible for both mothers and fathers to take childcare leave; and (iii) expanding the child nursing care leave system and establishing a short-term leave system for family care. Revision of the Act on Child Care and Family Care Leave was deliberated based on this proposal and the draft revised bill was submitted to the Diet in April 2009.

3) Promotion and evaluation of measures at companies to support balance between work and childcare and family care.

The Act for Measures to Support the Development of the Next Generation requires employers with a constant workforce of 301 or more employees to formulate an general business owner action plan containing measures to support work and childcare balance for workers, and to submit this plan to the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare. Moreover, companies formulating and implementing an appropriate action plan, which are recognized by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare as having achieved a set of conditions, such as fulfilling the targets in the action plan, are permitted to use a certification mark issued by the minister. As of the end of March 2009, 652 companies have received certification, and in addition to raising awareness and encouraging more companies to aim for certification, measures are being implemented to raise awareness of the certification mark itself.

The Act for Measures to Support the Development of the Next Generation was partially amended in December 2008. The major revisions regarding the general business owner action plan are as follows:

1. The obligation to formulate and submit a general business owner action plan will be expanded from companies with more than 301 employees to encompass companies with more than 101 employees (to come into force on April 1, 2011).

2. Companies required to formulate and submit a general business owner action plan will also be required to disclose the action plan and promote awareness about it among employees (came into force on April 1, 2009).

4) Enhancement of childcare services, etc.

In February 2008, the government developed “The New Zero-waiting List for Day Care Centers” in order to enhance, strengthen and promote the quality and quantity of child daycare and after-school measures. This strategy will be implemented over a concentrated three-year period, starting from FY2008. In FY2008, measures were implemented under “The New Zero-waiting List for Day Care Centers” to respond to new demand for daycare including development of daycare centers, and to provide training to improve quality of daycare. In addition, the fund for child-rearing was established in the prefectures in order to develop a system under which parents can raise their children without any anxiety.

(6) Securing employment to 65 years of age by raising the statutory retirement age and introducing a continuous employment system

Based on the Act Concerning Stabilization of Employment of Older Persons, which was amended in 2004, employers are required to raise statutory retirement age to 65 years in stages and to construct measures to ensure employment for older persons through the introduction of a continuous employment system, etc.

(7) Regional activation, town planning, and tourism

In order to improve the situation for women who want to be involved in regional activation activities, but have few opportunities to actually engage in such activities, and also to promote the active participation of women in this field, the government has dispatched women who are active in regional activation as advisors to 12 locations around Japan that are developing women-based initiatives for activation. The advisors hold meetings to promote exchange of experiences and further disseminate their knowledge and the results of such exchanges.

G Women in power and decision-making

(1) Expansion of women’s participation in policy decision-making processes

1) Formulation of the Program for Accelerating Women’s Social Participation

Given the necessity for further strategic efforts to expand women’s participation, in April 2008 the Program for Accelerating Women’s Social Participation was adopted by the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality. This program sets out a basic direction for measures, based on the three following topics: realization of work-life balance, measures to support women’s efforts to build their capacity and fulfill their potential, and awareness raising. The program also stipulates specific efforts to be implemented by FY2010 as a means of accelerating women’s participation in all fields.

In specific terms, the development of infrastructure for promoting women’s participation in all fields, including making strategic calls on top-level management in every sector of society, by the Minister of State for Gender Equality and others. Moreover, three fields have been identified in which although women’s participation is expected, it has, to date, not advanced as much as would be hoped. These fields are medical doctors, researchers and public employees. Prioritized measures in these three fields are being implemented as detailed below.

1. Medical doctors

In order to improve the situation facing the medical profession in which it is difficult to balance child-rearing, nursing care, etc., and work due to chronic overtime, and irregular working hours including nights and being on-call, active efforts are being made to develop an environment in which work-life balance can be promoted and women find it easier to utilize their skills.

In specific terms, support is currently being provided to support female doctors to return to work, through the establishment of female doctor “banks” and help and consultation desks in each prefecture, as well as other measures, including promoting the introduction of short standard working hours and shift-work systems for doctors to promote work-life balance, in

addition to the establishment of childcare centers in hospitals.

2. Researchers

The Second Basic Plan for Gender Equality and the Third Science and Technology Basic Plan point out the necessity to create an environment in which research can be balanced with childbirth and child-rearing, stating a numeric target for the recruitment of female researchers (25% in the field of natural sciences as a whole).

Given the stipulations of these plans, the government is implementing and promoting a variety of programs, including the Supporting Activities for Female Researchers and the Supporting Positive Activities for Female Researchers. The former is the support for universities and research institutes that construct a framework to enable female researchers to balance work and life. The latter is the support for universities and research institutes that proactively hire female researchers in the fields of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture in which the proportion of the employment of female researchers is particularly low.

Targeting female high school and university students, a variety of information provision and awareness raising campaigns are being implemented about the field of science and engineering, which is an area that girls tend not to progress their studies in. In addition, the government provides opportunities for junior/senior high school girls to interact with female researchers, engineers, and university students or to attend delivery classes in order to raise interest and awareness in science and technology.

3. Public employees

There are many cases in which public employees change positions and locations frequently, in addition to which those of central government ministries and agencies tend to work chronically long hours. Consequently, it is difficult to say that the environment for a public employees is one that is conducive to work-life balance. Measures are being promoted to revise working practices of public employees, including efforts to reduce the overtime work of male employees.

Moreover, a target has been set for central government public employees in particular, to increase the percentage of female national public employees in director-level and higher positions to at least 5% by the end of FY2010. In addition, the Plan for the Enlargement of Recruitment and Promotion of Female Officials and other plans call for each Office and Ministry and agency to continue to enhance and revise concrete and detailed action plans that contain specific numeric targets, based on the benchmark goal of increasing the percentage of female national public employees in director-level and higher positions to at least 3% more than current levels.

2) Promotion of the recruitment and promotion of female national public employees

Based on the “Guidelines Concerning the expanded of Recruitment and Promotion of Female National Public Employees” established by the National Personnel Authority, each Office and Ministry formulated the “Plan on Expanded Recruitment and Promotion of Female employees” and are advancing efforts to expand the recruitment and promotion of women.

The Guidelines were established in 2001 and revised in December 2005. The contents of the main revisions include: (1) working to promote efforts contributing to promotion, such as introducing mentoring program whereby senior personnel provide advice and guidance to junior female personnel; (2) working to rehire women who have retired mid-career and to recruit women regarded as possessing specialized knowledge and experience, as well as managerial or supervisory abilities, in selection; (3) working to set specific objectives for the recruitment and promotion of female personnel to the extent possible; and (4) contributing to the smooth return to work of personnel on child care leave, by working to maintain and improve their knowledge and skills, among others, and providing for their career formation following their return to work.

In the decision adopted by the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality in April 2004 on the Enlargement of the Recruitment and Promotion of Female National Public Officers, in addition to stipulating a framework for measures on the enlargement of recruitment and promotion, an agreement has been drawn up through the meetings of directors in charge of personnel management at each ministry and agency, whereby a target has been set of around 30% for female national public employees to be recruited through the Level I recruitment examination (requiring knowledge and skills gained through university-level education and practical abilities by utilizing them) for clerical officers in the fields of administration, law, economy, as a rough indication of the share of women in the total number of recruits for the government as a whole until around FY2010.

Moreover, efforts are being advanced based on the abovementioned Program for Accelerating Women's Social Participation.

Since 2005 (since 2007 in conjunction with the National Personnel Authority), the government has been implementing an annual follow-up concerning the status of measures to enlarge the recruitment and promotion of female national public employees in each Office and Ministry and the results are published. In FY2008, women accounted for 24.2% of persons recruited in administrative divisions after having passed the Level I recruitment examination.

3) Promotion of women's participation in national advisory councils

With regard to the promotion of the recruitment of women to sit on national advisory councils, the government implemented measures systematically towards the target set out by the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality in 2000 to "make persistent efforts to achieve the goal of 30% participation rate as early as possible before the end of FY2005." According to a survey carried out on September 30, 2005, the proportion of women serving on such councils stood at 30.9%, meaning that the target had been achieved six months ahead of the deadline. Given this result, in April 2006, the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality set a new target, namely to make efforts to ensure that by 2020 either male or female membership of national advisory councils does not fall below 40% of total membership. As of the end of September 2008, the proportion of women serving on such bodies stood at 32.4%.

4) Support for efforts by companies, educational and research institutions and other bodies and organizations

In September 2006, the government issued a document in the name of the Minister of State for Gender Equality to local governments, universities and a variety of other institutions and organizations, requesting their cooperation in efforts to expand women's participation in policy decision-making processes.

As support for efforts being made at companies, the government is cooperating with employer's organizations to hold the Positive Action Promotion Council, which is composed of senior management from companies and which encourages voluntary efforts by companies. In addition, in order to ensure the promotion of skills of female workers, the Corporation Award for the Promotion of Gender Equality (Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare Award and Prefectural Labour Bureau Award) is being run through public applications and presented to companies taking active measures to promote positive action.

Moreover, in order to promote concrete efforts on positive action by companies, the Positive Action Backup Site was established, which features information on the status of measures being implemented, submitted by each individual company. In addition, information is also provided through e-mail newsletters to personnel selected at the place of work to be in charge of promoting equal opportunities, in order to facilitate their activities.

I Human rights of women

The Human Rights Organs of the Ministry of Justice have unified the telephone number of the “Women’s Rights Hotline”, a counseling hotline specialized in women’s rights, established in the legal affairs bureaus and the district legal affairs bureaus around the country. A human rights counseling service on the internet has also been set up, which is open for registration 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. In this way the government is further enhancing its consultative structure for the women’s rights in response to cases of domestic violence inflicted by partners or spouses and cases of sexual harassment.

J Women and the media

(1) Promotion of gender equality and measures to ensure respect for human rights in the media

In response to the serious issue of harmful information on the internet surrounding young people, the government is assisting the development in communities of a supportive structure to protect children from harmful information, and has compiled and distributed leaflets and DVDs to promote awareness about harmful information.

Based on the Law for Punishing Acts Related to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and for Protection of Children, which was amended in June 2004 including heavier penalties for such crimes, the police are actively promoting a crackdown on crimes relating to child pornography and are making efforts to protect children who have been damaged physically or mentally by such acts.

(2) Deliberations towards the establishment of rules in new media such as the internet

With regard to filtering, which is one of the effective means to protect young people from harmful information on the internet about sex and violence, the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications requested to mobile phone carriers and other businesses to promote the introduction of filtering and other measures to improve the situation, and efforts are being made to introduce filtering and other measures. In addition, the government is encouraging internet providers to create their own voluntary rules and to abide by such rules, and is promoting awareness raising activities in order to establish a set of morals among the businesses responsible for providing and transmitting information.

The Act on Development, etc. of an Environment That Provides Safe and Secure Internet Use for Young People, which has come into force in April 2009, includes the following provisions: (i) in cases where a mobile phone terminal user is a person under 18 years, a mobile phone and personal handy-phone system (PHS) carrier shall provide service to filter content harmful to young people unless his/her guardian requests the non-use of the service; and (ii) when requested to do so by a user, an internet service provider (ISP) shall provide software for filtering content harmful to young people or a service to filter content harmful to young people.

The Internet Hotline Center, commissioned by the government and began service in June 2006, receives reports on illegal or harmful information on the internet including obscene images from internet users, reports illegal information to the police and requests removal of illegal or harmful information to the ISP.

K Women and the environment

In order to further assist people’s voluntary participation in environmental conservation activities, the government is engaging in efforts to promote and strengthen measures and cooperation with various bodies engaged in environmental conservation. These include the implementation of environmental activities clubs project in which children can participate, the implementation of an environmental counselor registration system that is used to provide advice to residents and business

owners, the operation of environmental information centers that support environmental conservation efforts by governments, non-profit organizations (NPOs) and business owners and encourage partnership, the provision of subsidies for environmental conservation activities through public and private sector contributions to the Global Environment Fund, and the provision of opportunities to interact with the natural environment.

L The girl-child

The Act on Punishment of Activities Relating to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and the Protection of Children was revised in 2004 to increase the statutory penalties for crimes.

Upon the ratification of the "Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography" in 2005, Japan endeavours to enforce its implementation through cooperation with relevant ministries.

Japan participated in the "Third World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents" held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in November 2008. At the opening ceremony, the Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan delivered a speech on behalf of the host country of the Second Congress in Yokohama, expressing an active commitment to work on sexual exploitation of children in cooperation with the international community.

Part Three: Development of Institutional Framework

1. Second Basic Plan for Gender Equality

On December 27, 2005, the Cabinet approved the Second Basic Plan for Gender Equality as the basic plan based on the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society. The Second Basic Plan incorporates 12 important fields, and sets out the basic policy direction until 2020 and concrete measures to be implemented by the end of FY2010 for each field.

(12 Important Fields)

- 1 Expand women's participation in policy decision-making processes
- 2 Review social systems and practices and raise awareness from a gender-equal perspective
- 3 Secure equal opportunities and treatment between women and men in the field of employment
- 4 Establish gender equality for realizing dynamic rural areas
- 5 Support the efforts of men and women to harmonize work with their family and community life
- 6 Develop conditions that allow the elderly to live with peace of mind
- 7 Eliminate all forms of violence against women
- 8 Support lifelong health for women
- 9 Promote gender equality in the media
- 10 Enrich education and learning that promote gender equality and facilitate diversity of choice
- 11 Contribute to the "Equality, Development and Peace" of the global community
- 12 Promote gender equality in fields requiring new initiatives
(Science and technology; disaster prevention and recovery; regional revitalization, town planning and tourism environment)

2. Expansion and strengthening of the organizations and functions of national machinery

(1) Exercise of the functions of the Council for Gender Equality

The Council for Gender Equality has been promoting the investigation and discussion of basic principles, basic policies and important matters for formation of a gender-equal society under the leadership of the Prime Minister, the Chief Cabinet Secretary who chairs the Council, and the Minister of State for Social Affairs and Gender Equality.

Consulted by the Prime Minister on a basic concept for the formulation of the Basic Plan for Gender Equality in July 2004, the Council for Gender Equality submitted the report to the Prime Minister in July 2005 entitled, "Basic Philosophy for the Revision of the Basic Plan for Gender Equality – Toward a Society where both Women and Men Shine." This set out the basic concept for revision of the Basic Plan for Gender Equality that had been approved by the Cabinet in December 2000. Based on the report submitted, the government compiled a revised Basic Plan, and in December 2005, this revised plan was approved by the Cabinet, after the Prime Minister had consulted and received a report from the Council on the revisions.

In order to ensure that the Second Basic Plan for Gender Equality is promoted effectively, the Council for Gender Equality utilizes the opinions and knowledge of experts from various fields concerning the implementation status of measures to promote the formation of a gender-equal society being implemented by government, and engages in monitoring of the status. Since 2004, the Council has monitored such issues as Official Development Assistance (ODA), the adoption and dissemination of international norms and standards, measures for capacity-building and lifelong learning to facilitate diversity of choices, and support to the elderly for living independently, and provided opinions to related ministries.

In addition the Council has also engaged in research and discussion on expansion of women's participation, follow-up to the Second Basic Plan on Gender Equality, violence against women, work-life balance, and promotion of gender equality in the local communities.

As the Second Basic Plan for Gender Equality is scheduled to be entirely revised in FY2010, on March 26, 2009, the Council for Gender Equality was consulted by the Prime Minister regarding the basic concept for the formulation of the next plan. Based on this request from the Prime Minister, the Council is currently researching and examining issues concerning the formulation of the next plan.

(2) Efforts by local governments

Looking at the status of formulation of ordinances and byelaws regarding gender equality, as of 2008, the formulation rate had risen to 97.9% in prefectures and 21.9% in municipalities. The formulation of the Basic Plan for Gender Equality is required of prefectural governments, and the formulation rate for municipal governments rose to 57.1% in 2008. The number of gender equality centers and other general facilities for women established by local governments for the purpose of promoting gender equality stood at 333 in 2008.

(3) Promotion of collaboration and cooperation with international organizations and national machineries for gender equality in other countries

In June 2006, Japan hosted the first East Asia Gender Equality Ministerial Meeting, and in December 2007, participated in the second meeting, which was hosted by India.

(4) Minister of State for Gender Equality

Since January 2001, the Chief Cabinet Secretary was designated as the minister responsible for gender equality, based on the Cabinet Office Establishment Law. Since October 2005, a separate minister from the Chief Cabinet Secretary has been appointed to take charge of gender equality issues and measures to tackle the declining birthrate, who is engaged in overall coordination and planning of policy and measures for the promotion of the formation of a gender-equal society.

(5) Budget

Trends in national budget relating to gender equality and trends in prefectural and ordinance designated city budgets for women and gender equality are as follows.

(Unit: million yen)

	National budget relating to gender equality	Prefectural and ordinance designated city budgets for women and gender equality
FY2004	9,922,420	11,148
FY2005	10,604,455	12,216
FY2006	4,357,001	11,186
FY2007	4,697,170	10,842
FY2008	4,570,017	10,730
FY2009	4,271,448	(Not available)

3. Research and the collection, development and provision of information relating to gender equality

The government implemented the Public Opinion Poll on a Gender-equal Society and the results were announced in September 2007.

The government conducted the Survey on Time Use and Leisure Activities in 2006 to find out how

people divide their time in their daily lives and what their major activities are. The results were announced to provide basic data that contributes to an understanding of the time spent on such activities as housework, childcare and nursing care, etc.

Part Four: Main challenges and actions to address them

1. Expand women's participation in policy decision-making processes

With regard to efforts being implemented following set targets, such as the recruitment of female national public officers, the proportion of women as a whole has reached a relatively high level. However, the proportion of women serving in managerial positions in both the public and private sectors and the proportion of women taking executive positions in all sectors remain at a low level. Looked at as a whole, the expansion of the women's participation in policy decision-making processes is still only very gradual, and in international terms Japan's ranking in terms of the Gender Empowerment Measurement (GEM), Gender Gap Index (GGI) and other indices remains low. Given this situation, based on the Program for Accelerating Women's Social Participation and others it is necessary to proceed with the strategic implementation of measures.

2. Review social systems and practices and raise awareness from a gender-equal perspective

As a result of promotion of PR and awareness raising activities about gender equality, the number of people who are opposed to the concept "the husband should work outside the home, while the wife should take on domestic duties" now surpasses the number of people who support it, but there are differences in perception about this issue between women and men, among generations and among various regions of Japan. Moreover, in international comparisons, there are still strong stereotypical perceptions for gender roles in Japan. Given these differences and disparities in perception, from now it is necessary to develop more detailed and effective PR activities, and to accelerate efforts to transform perceptions. Furthermore, in order to establish a firm concept of gender equality among the people, it is important for not only government but also all parts of the private sector to play a role. To this end, partnership in gender equality promotional efforts with private sector organizations should be stepped up.

3. Secure equal opportunities and treatment between women and men in the field of employment

The previous two amendments to the Act on Securing, Etc. of Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women in Employment have resulted in significant developments of the legal system. However, as a situation persists in which it is difficult to conclude that substantive equal opportunities have been ensured, by implementing strict and appropriate administrative guidance in response to violations of the Act and by firmly enforcing it and the other measures mentioned in this document, the government will continue to make efforts to ensure substantive equal employment opportunities. Moreover, in recent years the number of non-regular workers, including part-time workers, has been increasing dramatically, and such issues as differences in treatment, including wage differentials between regular and non-regular workers, and employment instability of non-regular workers, have become serious issues. It is therefore necessary to make efforts to ensure equal treatment for all workers, and to promote efforts to ensure that workers who wish to transfer to regular, full-time employment are able to do so. Furthermore, the further dissemination of a diverse selection of working styles, such as the short-time working system, flex time and telework, whereby people are able to continue their working lives in harmony with household duties, is expected. In addition, there are many cases in which women who have left employment for the purpose of child-rearing seek to return to work as regular employees but are unable to do so, and it is also important to develop an environment in which women can find reemployment in accordance with their wishes. With regard to women's renewed challenges, it is still the case that there are many women who seek to work while caring for their children, but cannot find a good match for their various needs for reemployment and assistance for starting a business. It is for this reason that it is necessary to enhance the support structure for reemployment and starting a business, and provide more detailed information and support for capacity development.

4. Establish gender equality for realizing dynamic rural areas

With regard to family-based agricultural management, Family Management Agreements (Family Business Agreements) set out the management policy of a family-run agricultural business, as well as stipulating the roles of each member of the family, working conditions and environment. The number of the concluded Family Management Agreements is gradually increasing, by various efforts such as clearly providing a position for the Family Management Agreements in the national farmers' pension scheme (Farmers' Pension Fund system), and enhancing the government subsidy system for premiums. (Number of households with a Family Business Agreement: 2003: 25,151; 2008: 40,663).

The above mentioned developments lead to the annual increase of the number of entrepreneurial activities by rural women (2002: 7,735 cases; 2007: 9,533 cases) , such as the processing of local agricultural products and their sale in farmers' markets direct to consumers . In this way, rural women play a significant role in revitalizing rural areas. However, micro-industries with an annual sales turnover of less than 3 million yen account for 60% of these ventures. Thus, a challenge will be to scale up and, at the same time, sophisticate these entrepreneurial activities by rural women..

Moreover, the percentage of women serving on agricultural committee members and as board members of agricultural cooperatives stands at 4.2% (1,682 persons (2006) and 2.1% (465 persons (2006), respectively. Although the proportion of women participating in decision-making processes is steadily rising, the levels remain low, due to the lack of understanding in rural areas and the absence of any system to appoint women in such positions.

For these reasons, in addition to measures to support women who are active in rural areas and to ensure their economic stability, further promotional efforts are required to encourage the participation of rural women in policy decision-making processes.

5. Support the efforts of men and women to harmonize work with their family and community life

A look at the current situation confirms the difficulty in achieving work-life balance, including a lack of childcare services, long working hours, inflexible working styles, and the fact that approximately 70% of women leave work at time of childbirth (in the case of the first child). In addition, men take charge of small part of housework and child-rearing, and given the difficulty for men to take childcare leave, the situation persists whereby women are faced with an either-or choice during their child-bearing years of continuing with employment or getting married and having children. The proportion of women who remain in employment has remained almost unchanged for the past 20 years.

For these reasons, it is necessary to make efforts to gain the necessary data to understand the changes over the years of the status of women who leave work at time of childbirth and, based on the Charter for Work-Life Balance, the Action Policy for Promoting Work-Life Balance, and "Japan's Strategy to Support Children and Family," which were formulated in 2007, to steadily advance two types of measures simultaneously, in a two-pronged approach. Namely, the realization of work-life balance for both men and women, through reform of working styles, and secondly, enhancement of the social infrastructure to support child-rearing including childcare services, responding to diverse working styles,.

Moreover, as single-mother households face economic difficulties due to low income, various measures to support self-reliance should continue to be promoted.

6. Develop conditions that allow the elderly to live with peace of mind

There is a high possibility that women whose spouse has deceased, including mother and child

households, will face economic difficulties, and this leads to economic hardship for elderly women living alone. In addition, looking also the status of nursing care workers, the need for whom is expected to increase rapidly, it can be seen that improvement of the treatment of such workers, of whom women make up 80% of the workforce, is urgently required. Accordingly, efforts to improve treatment of nursing care workers have been implemented, including the review of remuneration for nursing care workers in FY2009 (increasing remuneration by 3.0%).

Given this situation, from now the development of detailed and attentive measures will be required that are mindful of the needs and lifestyle differences between women and men. These include a response that promotes employment for elderly women who are experiencing financial difficulties, creation of social participation opportunities for elderly women in a wide range of activities, and the promotion of measures that seek to prevent the need for nursing care that take into account the differences between women and men.

In terms of measures for persons with disabilities, it is necessary to carry out the comprehensive and appropriate support corresponding to individual needs of persons with disabilities according to their sex and age, and the state of their disabilities, etc., to promote independence and social participation of persons with disabilities. Therefore, the investigations of needs of persons with disabilities including sex-disaggregated data have been implemented, and will also be done continuously.

7. Eliminate all forms of violence against women

Social awareness of violence against women is still insufficient and further active publicity and awareness-raising, etc., are required. In addition, public awareness campaigns are needed, including raising awareness among the younger generation about the prevention of violence.

The number of cases of spousal violence and the number of protection orders issued are rising year by year and related ministries and agencies need to cooperate with local governments to steadily promote measures to protect victims and assist them in becoming self-reliant, based on the revised Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims.

With regard to trafficking in persons, although preventive measures implemented in accordance with the Action Plan of Measures to Combat Trafficking in Persons have had a certain effect in reducing the number of victims, private sector organizations bear a large part of the work to support victims, and promoting comprehensive measures and protection of victims through public-private cooperation, as well as strengthening international cooperation, is needed.

An increase in the number of reported cases of sexual harassment is being witnessed, and the government recognizes the need for further measures. Under the revised Act on Securing, Etc. of Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women in Employment, measures have been strengthened that require employers to consider and put into place measures to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. The names of companies that do not comply with administrative guidance are publicized and employers who do not establish the measures required under the Act on Securing, Etc. of Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women in Employment are subject to administrative guidance requiring the steady implementation of measures.

8. Support lifelong health for women

In recent years, the importance has become apparent of considering the gender differences in terms of how easily women and men contract illnesses and how fast conditions develop and spread, depending on the disease in question. In addition, it is necessary to provide support to enable women to take the initiative in being aware of their own health and engage in independent measures to lead healthy lives. Based on this necessity, in order to further promote measures to support

healthy lives for women, the government will investigate and establish methods to effectively develop programs.

Comprehensive measures for gender-specific medical services are still in their infancy, and it is necessary to deepen discussion about this area of medicine and consider concrete measures to promote full-fledged gender-specific medical services. In addition, with regard to the provision of an environment in which mothers can give birth safely and with peace of mind, issues of a lack of doctors including pediatricians and obstetricians, and the lack of an emergency medical structure in medical institutions are becoming increasingly serious, and this situation requires efforts to boost assistance, including the provision of a working environment that is conducive to work-life balance, and support for female doctors who have broken off their careers to return to work. Measures are also required to enhance systems for cooperation among medical institutions.

9. Promoting gender equality in the media

From now on, to ensure that information transmitted through the media is respectful of women's rights, based on collaboration and cooperation with civil society, including related NPOs, it is expected that industries and businesses involved will promote voluntary efforts, including measures to raise awareness among relevant persons in various types of media. In particular, it is expected that swift action will be implemented to deal with illegal and harmful information on the internet. Moreover, women's participation in media is at an extremely low level and in order to promote media expression in which women's rights are taken into consideration, it is necessary to actively promote women in various media fields, including in decision-making, such as planning, production and editing.

10. Enrich education and learning that promote gender equality and facilitate diversity of choice

Currently, the rate of advancement of women to university is almost on a par with men. In addition, in a public opinion survey, the proportion of respondents who feel "equal" in school education is relatively high in comparison to other fields. On the other hand, however, women lack the opportunities to utilize their capacity in practice, and from now, it will be necessary to make efforts to further enhance education that promote gender equality and their education and learning activities for their empowerment that link to practical activities. Such efforts would include taking into account the circumstances pertaining to women, such as childbirth and child-rearing, as well as women's wishes and aspirations at each stage of their life cycle, and using these considerations as the basis for enhanced implementation of effective women's education and learning activities, and the capacity development for work. In particular, further efforts are required to link the results of education, academic activities and capacity building to employment, reemployment and social activities.

11. Contribute to the "Equality, Development and Peace" of the global community

International exchange and cooperation is an extremely important task for gender equality. It is necessary to further promote international exchange on gender equality issues, including in particular the promotion of the formation of international networks that respond to concrete issues.

12. Promote gender equality in fields requiring new initiatives

Measures in the field of science and technology are still in their infancy, and further efforts are expected in order to disseminate widely the results achieved to date.

In the field of disaster prevention and recovery, it is expected that efforts will become established at the local level.

With regard to regional revitalization, town planning and tourism, it is necessary to implement

systematic measures for human resource development through practical activities and to promote women's activities in the creation of networks.

In terms of the environment, in order that women's interests, knowledge and experience of environmental issues can be applied broadly, not only locally but also from a global perspective, it is necessary to promote greater participation of women in policy decision-making processes relating to the environment, including increasing the female ratio in members of relevant advisory councils.