

## Day 3: Opinion Exchange

The participants were divided into four groups and each group made a short presentation, headed by a representative. After the presentations, everyone had a discussion and exchanged opinions based on each topic.

### **Group 1** “Example of better working environment in media outlets”

#### **Presentation summary (Presenter: Japan/ Newspaper)**

In 2019, the ratio of female workers recruited was 40% of the total new recruits in the newspaper firm she works for. However, the ratio was only 20% when she joined it. The firm has three main initiatives in increasing the number of women journalists. The first is the reduction of working hours: the regular hours were until 9 p.m., but shortened to 7 p.m. This led to the reduction of daily working hours to 10–12 hours. The second is respecting the private life of each journalist. This led to flexible working style and allowed



Group 1 presentation

both female and male employees to work from home. The third is an additional allowance for employees who covered for the staff on parental leave, etc. This helped alleviate the sense of inequality unmarried employees felt for taking on the workload of staff on parental leave.

#### ○ **Discussion topic: “What is an ideal working environment for women in the media?”**

##### **Main opinions:**

- ▶ My company allows employees to bring their children to work. My family is also supportive. (Philippines/ Newspaper)
- ▶ Most politics journalists with experience are men, therefore men wrote most byline front page articles. However, a recent survey shows that the ratio of political articles by men and women journalists has become equal. (Australia/ Newspaper)
- ▶ To have a competitive advantage, women need expertise in a specific area. Thus, we must study. However, journalists work long hours rendering it hard to set aside time for learning. A support system is needed to let them return to school. (Republic of Korea / Newspaper)
- ▶ A newspaper firm in Japan has a system that allows employees to go back to study for two to three years and then return to the former position. (Japan/ Newspaper)
- ▶ Journalists hate giving their own articles to others, but should allow more job sharing as the news cycle can continue if they allow colleagues to take over. (Australia/ Newspaper)

#### ○ **Group discussion summary:**

For women working in the media to maintain work-life balance, support from both company and society (including family and friends) is necessary. For example, it is ideal for working parents to be able to bring their children to work or to review the system of deducting the number of days/years taken off as maternity or parental leave from the total years of service

or retirement allowance. It would also be ideal to establish a system for journalists to be able to take leave to study new things to broaden their career. Introducing flextime policy, job sharing among journalists or working from home can reduce working hours. We should not separate men and women. It is important to create a good working environment for both men and women to have an open and free environment.

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## **Group 2 “Issues of gender equality and women's empowerment raised by the media”**

### **Presentation summary (Presenter: Japan/ Newspaper)**

The media should report stories on active and iconic women, female leaders close to us or men and women helping each other in a household. It is also necessary for the media to inform the public of harassments women face. The number of women journalists in the media is increasing, but the one of women in managerial posts remains limited. This leads to the media presenting issues from men’s point of view. More women should participate in politics and administration. The media has an important role to play in encouraging women to take their own initiatives to empower women.



Group 2 presentation

### **○ Discussion topic: “What we, as members of the media, should report to promote gender equality”**

#### **Main opinions:**

- ▶ It is still commonly accepted that a woman should be a housewife. We should make a statement that women can love and take care of children while having a job. (Philippines/ Newspaper)
- ▶ We in the media should make our intention clear when writing articles on promoting gender equality. (Thailand/ Newspaper)
- ▶ It is important for the media to point out various issues. However, at the same time, we should write about admirable and impressive women. (India/ Newspaper)
- ▶ Articles about men who take up child rearing are often written from women’s point of view. It is necessary to make a statement in a strategic manner in order to upend the stereotyped perception of gender roles. (Japan/ Newspaper)
- ▶ It is important to write articles on women’s hardships, but I wonder if men read such articles. We must think about ways to deliver messages to men. (Japan/ TV station)
- ▶ There were comments that men do not read articles on women, but if the number of stories on women increases, men will eventually read them. (New Zealand/ Internet media)

○ **Group discussion summary:**

The media is in a position to provide materials on promoting gender equality. For example, it would be effective to introduce examples of women who create positive social impact or women and men who can be a role model for the society. However, it is a fact that our society is still male-dominated and the readers of articles on women are mostly women. To promote gender equality, it is necessary to provide topics that interest men. On the other hand, increasing stories on women may lead men to read such articles inevitably. In any case, there is a need to think strategically on delivering these messages.

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**Group 3 “Networking of women journalists”**

**Presentation summary (Presenter: Republic of Korea / Newspaper)**

In the Republic of Korea, the number of women journalists is on the increase each year as well as media outlets targeting women. As an example of networking of women journalists, the presenter introduced a Korean women journalist association comprising 31 Korean media outlets and 1,400 journalists. The association provides workshops, training, and writes articles on gender. The presenter also introduced a labor union for the media and activities of unofficial study groups. The presenter concluded that it is necessary to increase the number of women in managerial posts and promote further networking among women journalists through an interaction between senior and junior female employees.



Group 3 presentation

○ **Discussion topic: “What a network of women journalists can produce”**

**Main opinions:**

- ▶ As far as I know, an official organization like the Korean women journalist association does not exist in my country. (Malaysia/ Newspaper)
- ▶ As each media outlet competes with others, challenge lies ahead in creating a cross-organizational association. (Japan/ TV station)
- ▶ The biggest challenge is taking an initiative in creating a network. (Malaysia/ Newspaper)
- ▶ The leading organization in promoting a women journalists’ network does not necessarily have to be official. (Australia/ Newspaper)
- ▶ Networking initiative is important to claim the rights of women interviewees and women journalists. (Thailand/ TV station)
- ▶ If a women journalists’ network is to be created in my country, I want to promote mentoring of young women journalists. (Australia/ Newspaper)
- ▶ If the target is women only, this alienates men which may result in reverse gender discrimination. It is better to target both men and women journalists with gender sensitive viewpoints. (Japan/ Newspaper)
- ▶ Vulnerable people need to form a group to voice an opinion. (Republic of Korea /

Newspaper)

○ **Group discussion summary:**

Republic of Korea has a women journalists' association that plays a central role in networking among women journalists. However, as far as we know, no such organization exists in the countries where our participants come from. We welcome any opportunity to promote women journalists' network. The network does not need to be an official organization; an unofficial and flexible network can also be effective. When women journalists come together, this can be used as a tool to voice concerns on improving working conditions or issues on gender. This exchange program brought together women journalists from eleven countries of the Asia-Pacific region, which presents a good opportunity to establish an international women journalists' network.

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**Group 4** "Example of advanced initiatives on gender equality and women's empowerment in Asia Pacific countries"

**Presentation summary (Presenter: New Zealand/ TV station)**

Since 1995, BBC has conducted the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP). Every five years, GMMP has done a one-day study of the representation and portrayal of women and men in the news media in over 100 countries. In 1995, 24% of the news subjects were women, the ratio of female commentators was 19% and 37% of reports were by women journalists. Our company took part in the BBC-initiated "50:50 Project," a scheme to increase women's representation in media contents to reflect the real life that has an equal gender mix. One in three viewers noticed the difference, 20% of women viewed it positively, and most young viewers welcomed the changes. As a journalist, it is always important to strive for an equal gender ratio.



Group 4 presentation

○ **Discussion topic: "How to increase the presence of women in journalism"**

**Main opinions:**

- ▶ We have entered an age in which we get criticized on the social media if only men talk about women's empowerment in the media. To promote women's empowerment, we need men's support. The media should present a balanced report by reporting the voices of men who support women's empowerment. (India/ Newspaper)
- ▶ We must check the gender distribution of staff or information sources. (Japan/ TV station)
- ▶ It is difficult to make changes in the company, as there is a risk of losing our job. Since the #MeToo movement began with a tweet by a female freelance journalist, the leading media had no choice but to follow the trend and make changes. (India/ Newspaper)
- ▶ The spread of online news made it easy to know the response of readers. Newspapers used to print political and economic issues on the front page as most readers are middle-

aged men in such traditional media. However, the trend is moving towards reporting on the hardship of life as a woman. The readers' and the media's interest in women's issues have begun to converge, resulting in an increase in such stories. (Japan/ Newspaper)

○ **Group discussion summary:**

Many challenges lie ahead in achieving equal gender distribution: women working in the media are relatively few, most information sources are men, the number of women in managerial posts is limited, men think women journalists get their job from their looks, and people feel women journalists deal only with soft-news stories. The tasks are to aim for an equal gender distribution by collecting gender distribution data of staff and information sources and to discuss the issue with not only women but also men. Most women in managerial posts in the media have worked harder than men to get there. Some think that feminism is prejudice, not about women's empowerment. We must break down the notion of feminism being prejudice.

## Review and Conclusion of Exchange of Opinions

**Dr. HAYASHI Kaori, Professor, Graduate School of Interdisciplinary Information Studies, The University of Tokyo**

I am delighted to welcome all the participants who have taken time out of your busy schedule to have a very active discussion throughout the program. I could sense all of the participants' joy of working as a journalist. At the same time, I could also sense the doubts, difficulties and dissatisfaction on how to stay involved with journalism because you love what you do so much.

I hope everyone could reflect on your position and think about how to stay involved with the job as a journalist and as a woman, through exchange of opinions. In recent years, the culture of journalism is going through drastic change with having more women and minority groups in the field as well as digital transformation. However, the objective of journalism remains the same, which I believe is "to create a better society." I hope and expect that women journalists will play more active roles in the future.



## Closing Remarks

**Ms. HASHIMOTO Seiko, Minister of State for Gender Equality, Minister in charge of Women's Empowerment**

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all of you for participating in the three-day exchange program. I am delighted to welcome journalists who are active in the frontlines in media outlets in various countries.

The media has a large influence and plays an important role in changing people's mindsets and reducing prejudice. For this reason, it is extremely important for women to play an active role in the decision-making process of the media and think of ways to include women's viewpoints and ways of thinking in this age of diversity. I hope the symposium allowed all of you to examine the activities and future of women journalists, and field visits and exchange of opinions deepened understanding of Japan and the roles of women working in the media. I would be delighted if all of you reported the experiences, new ideas or awareness learned from the program and make good use of these experiences in the future.

I also believe that the international network you have built during the three days would be a valuable asset. I hope all of you become a bridge of trust and friendship in the Asia Pacific region by using this network. I would like to conclude my speech by wishing you continued success that would lead to women's empowerment in the media as a whole.

