



Japan. Women Can Change the World.

Fourth World Conference on Women

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Comprehensive National-level Review on the 30th Anniversary of its Adoption

Government of Japan

Section One: Highlights

The Government of Japan has been working to ensure opportunities for women to participate in policymaking and planning processes in every sphere, and has further strengthened government-wide initiatives to realize policies from the perspective of gender equality in every sphere over the past five years. Specifically, all sections of the government are in the process of steadily implementing the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality (the Fifth Basic Plan) (approved by the Cabinet on December 25, 2020) based on the Basic Act for Gender Equal Society, in a unified manner.

With regard to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, based on the SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles, the government has been working on Japan's priority issues, including the realization of gender equality, in accordance with the key principle that realization of all of the SDGs requires the cross-sectoral values of respect for human rights as a universal value in the international community and the realization of gender equality and gender mainstreaming. The government views it necessary to always ensure these perspectives in many different initiatives and to reflect them in the government's measures. In addition, based on the opinions and discussions held by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Commission on the Status of Women, the government has actively complied with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and has promoted initiatives in line with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

(1) Acceleration of Appointment of Women to Higher Positions in Companies

In Japan, where the issue of declining birthrate and aging population is becoming more serious, the promotion of women's empowerment is indispensable for sustainable growth, as it will promote innovation from diverse perspectives and bring vitality to Japan's economy and society. Furthermore, in today's capital markets, the status of women's empowerment in a company is being taken into consideration in investment decisions, and women's empowerment in positions of responsibility in a company also leads to sustainable growth of the company, amid intensifying global competition. Based on this view, the Fifth Basic Plan set out the following achievement targets regarding the appointment of women to higher positions in companies:

Proportion of female employees at each level in private companies	
Section Chief level	30% (2025)
Director level	18% (2025)
Department manager level	12% (2025)
Proportion of female executives among companies listed on the Prime Market of the Tokyo Stock Exchange *1,2	19% (2025)
Proportion of companies without female executives among companies listed on the Prime Market of the Tokyo Stock Exchange *1,2	0% (2025)

*1 The Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality (partially revised on December 26, 2023)

*2 Executives include not only directors, auditors ("Kansayaku"), and executive officers ("Shikkoyaku"), but also executive officers ("Shikkoyakuin") and equivalent on the assumption of each company's target for appointing female executives—Basically, those selected and dismissed via decisions from the board of directors as "the appointment and dismissal of an important employee including

managers” in the Companies Act, but also those to whom important authority has been delegated for work, etc.

In October 2023, in response to the indication of the numerical targets, etc. pertaining to the ratio of women executives for Prime Market-listed companies in the Basic Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women 2023, the Tokyo Stock Exchange added the following items regarding the appointment of women executives in Prime Market-listed companies as “matters desired to be observed” to the Code of Corporate Conduct of the Securities Listing Regulations.

Establishment of Numerical Targets for the Percentage of Female Officers at Domestic Companies on the Prime Market1. Domestic companies on the Prime Market shall strive to appoint at least one female officer by 2025. 2. Domestic companies on the Prime Market shall aim to raise the percentage of their female officers to at least 30% by 2030.

3. The Exchange recommends that domestic companies on the Prime Market develop action plans to achieve the above targets.

*In addition to board members, auditors, and executive officers, the aforementioned female officers may include non-statutory executive officers and their equivalents.

(2) Acceleration of Measures to Eliminate Pay Differences Between Men and Women

The Act on the Promotion of Women's Active Engagement in Professional Life was amended and the scope of the obligation to establish and notify of a General Employer Action Plan and to publicize information regarding women's active engagement in professional life in the business was expanded from general employers with 301 or more regularly employed workers to general employers with 101 or more regularly employed workers (effective as of April 1st, 2022).

In addition, regarding items for publication of information, general employers with 301 or more regularly employed workers are mandated to publicize one or more items (two or more items in total) from each of the categories of (A) achievements in the provision of opportunities for professional life of women workers whom they employ or intend to employ, and (B) achievements in development of an employment environment that contributes to the creation of a balance between professional and personal life of workers they employ (effective as of June 1st, 2020), and general employers with 101 or more regularly employed workers are mandated to publicize one or more items from all of (A) and (B) (effective as of April 1st, 2022). The amendment thereby seeks to enhance the publication of information related to women's empowerment.

Although the pay differences between men and women in Japan have been narrowing over the long term, the gap is still large compared to other developed countries. In order to further narrow the gap in light of current contexts, the item “pay differences between men and women” was added to the items for publication of information in July 2022, and the publication of this item was made mandatory for general employers with 301 or more regularly employed workers.

(3) Strengthening of Support for Women Facing Difficult Problems

Issues facing women, such as poverty, victimization by sexual violence and sexual crimes, and the breakdown of family relationships, have become increasingly complex, diverse, and compounded. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has made these issues more apparent and made it an urgent issue to

strengthen new support for women, including the area of “measures to address loneliness and isolation.”

Under such circumstances, the Act on Support for Women Facing Difficult Problems was established (effective as of April 1st, 2024) in order to break away from using the Anti-Prostitution Act, which aims to “protect and rehabilitate girls who are likely to engage in prostitution,” as the legal basis for supporting women facing difficult problems and to establish a new support framework that incorporates the perspective of “collaboration with private organizations” that practice pioneering support for women.

Efforts are being made to enhance and strengthen effective support for women in various situations to ensure the smooth implementation the Act, as its provisions include the strengthening of local support systems, such as making it mandatory to make efforts to assign women’s counseling and support officers to each municipality, making it mandatory to make efforts to establish support coordination meetings in local governments, and clearly stating support for cooperation with private organizations.

Section Two: Priorities, Achievements, Challenges, and Setbacks

1. Over the past five years, what have been the most important achievements, challenges, and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women?

(1) Formulation of the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality and the SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles

(a) The Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality (the Fifth Basic Plan)

In December 2020, the government approved the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality (the Fifth Basic Plan) at the Cabinet meeting (partial revisions approved by the Cabinet in December 2023). In order to comprehensively and systematically promote measures based on the Basic Act for Gender Equal Society, the “basic recognition” for the period up to the end of FY2030 as well as the “basic direction of measures” and “specific initiatives” for the period up to the end of FY2025 were set forth in the Plan.

Since 2003, the Government of Japan has set a target of “Expecting to increase the percentage of women in leadership positions to at least 30% by 2020 in all fields in society.” However, the government recognizes that while women’s participation has been progressing in some fields, there have been fields in which progress has lagged behind, such as political and economic fields.

For this reason, the Fifth Plan set out a new aim to achieve a society by the 2030s in which everyone can be empowered without being conscious of their gender and where there is no gender imbalance among people in leadership positions, and to promote initiatives with the aim of achieving the milestone target of increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions to approximately 30% of the total as early as possible during the 2020s. " The Government of Japan is committed to making every effort to achieve this goal.

In the formulation of the Fifth Basic Plan, more than 6,000 comments were received from civil society and young people through public hearings and the invitation for public comments. Based on the comments, initiatives aiming for the consideration of the use of emergency contraceptives without a prescription and prevention of harassment related to sexual orientation and gender identity were newly added.

In light of changes in Japan’s economic and social environment and international circumstances, the government has once again presented the following four points in the Fifth Basic Plan as the type of society to aim for from the viewpoint of steadily implementing the multilateral agreements on gender equality in which Japan has proactively participated, and, through the realization thereof, will promote the formation of the gender-equal society that the Basic Act for Gender Equal Society aims for.

- i. A fair, diverse, vibrant, and sustainable society where men and women can fully leverage their individuality and capability based on their own will.
- ii. A society where the human rights of men and women are respected and individuals can live with dignity.
- iii. A society where work and life are harmonized and both men and women can have fulfilling working lives, other social lives, and family lives.
- iv. A society that incorporates the perspectives of gender equality and women’s empowerment in many different fields, undertakes initiatives that are consistent with the realization of an inclusive and sustainable world as set forth in the SDGs, and cooperates with the international community.

The Fifth Basic Plan establishes 11 individual fields to be extensively focused on and sets achievement targets to be attained through the implementation of the “specific initiatives” in each field, and the reported trends are publicly announced every year. The implementation of the Fifth Basic Plan is monitored by the “Expert Committee on Plan Implementation and Monitoring” and the “Expert Committee on Violence Against Women,” both of which are composed of experts. In the 2023 mid-year follow-up, there were some opinions about strengthening measures to accelerate the appointment of women executives from within companies, and based on these opinions, initiatives are being promoted by the relevant ministries and agencies.

(b) SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles

The SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles revised in December 2023 set forth as important items respect for human rights and gender equality, which should be realized across the board in all goals, as well as the realization of women’s empowerment, including acceleration of the appointment of women to higher positions. In addition, women and girls were added to stakeholders who promote the SDGs, and the importance of various stakeholders sharing a gender perspective was emphasized.

(2) Status on the Development of Related Legislation

Major laws established or amended during the past five years are as follows:

- In 2019, the Act on the Promotion of Women's Active Engagement in Professional Life was amended to expand the scope of the mandatory publication of information, and the Act on Comprehensively Advancing Labor Measures, and Stabilizing the Employment of Workers, and Enriching Workers' Vocational Lives (the Act on the Comprehensive Promotion of labor Measures) and the Act on Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women in Employment (the Equal Employment Opportunity Act) were amended. These amendments aimed to strengthen measures against power harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace.
- In 2021, the Act on the Welfare of Workers Who Take Care of Children or Other Family Members Including Child Care and Family Care Leave (the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act) was amended with the aim of developing an employment environment where it is easier to take childcare leave, such as by creating an environment that encourages men to take childcare leave and mandating employers to take measures to individually inform workers who report pregnancy or childbirth about the childcare leave system and to confirm their intention to take such leave.
- In 2021, the Act on the Prevention of Sexual Violence against Children by Educational Personnel was established with the aim of taking measures against sexual violence against children by educational personnel (effective as of April 2022).
- In 2021, the Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field was amended to clearly specify relevant organizations that are to work on promoting gender equality in the political field, promote efforts of political parties and other political organizations, strengthen national and local governments’ responsibilities, etc., and strengthen measures of the national government and local governments such as by adding new mandatory measures to address sexual harassment and harassment related to pregnancy or childbirth, etc.
- In 2022, legislation related to the Act on the Promotion of Women's Active Engagement in Professional Life was amended to establish the mandatory publication of information on pay differences between men and women.

- In 2022, in consideration of the fact that women sometimes face complex, diverse, and compounded issues, the Act on Support for Women Facing Difficult Problems was formulated to establish a new support framework, including the perspective of measures to prevent loneliness and isolation (effective as of April 2024).
- In 2022, the Act Establishing Special Provisions on Performance Agreements That Are Meant to Help Prevent the Harm Associated with Performing in Sexually Explicit Videos and to Contribute to Remedies for Performers in Order to Contribute to the Formation of a Society in Which Individuals' Sexual Dignity Is Respected (Act on Prevention and Remedy of Harm Associated with Performing in Sexually Explicit Videos), which aims to prevent damage caused by appearing in AVs (adult films) and to provide relief to victims thereof, was established.
- In 2022, the Civil Code was amended to abolish the 100-day period during which remarriage was prohibited only for women (effective as of April 2024).
- In 2023, the Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims (Spousal Violence Prevention Act) was amended with the aim of expanding the protection order system to cover cases of serious mental harm (effective as of April 2024).
- In 2023, the Penal Code and other laws related to sexual crimes were amended to newly establish crimes such as Penetrative Sexual Assault, and the so-called age of consent was raised from the age of 13 to the age of 16. In addition, the Act Prescribing Punishments for the Non-Consensual Recording and Distribution of Sexual Images, and Establishing Measures for Deleting the Electronic and Magnetic Records of Non-Consensual Images That Have Been Recorded on Seized Articles ("Act on Punishment of Non-Consensual Recording of Sexual Images") was established with the aim of dealing with sexual crimes more appropriately.
- In 2024, the "Act on Measures for the Prevention of Sexual Violence against Children by Education and Childcare Providers" ("Child Sexual Violence Prevention Act") was established, which introduced measures such as mandating providers of education and childcare services to take measures to prevent sexual violence against children (yet to come into effect).
- In 2024, the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act was amended with the aim of developing an employment environment where both men and women will be able to balance work and childcare/nursing care according to their preferences, such as by expanding measures to realize flexible work styles according to the age of the child, expanding the system for disclosing the percentage of male employees taking childcare leave, and mandating employers to take measures to individually inform workers who report that they face nursing care of the leave systems and confirming their intention.

(3) Establishment of the Children and Families Agency

With the purpose of comprehensively promoting measures for children based on the spirit of the Constitution of Japan and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Basic Act on Children's Policy was established in 2022 as an all-encompassing basic law to comprehensively and strongly promote measures for children throughout society, and the Children and Families Agency was established in April 2023.

In December 2023, based on the Basic Act on Children's Policy, the General Principles for Child-Related Measures were formulated to set forth the basic policies, etc. of the government-wide measures for children in order to comprehensively promote child-related policies. At the same time, the Children's Future Strategy was formulated to holistically approach countermeasures to the declining birth rate.

In addition, the "Comprehensive Measures to Prevent Sexual Violence against Children" was compiled as a broad measure for the prevention of sexual violence against children. As part of this effort, the Child Sexual Violence Prevention Act was established in June 2024, which includes provisions on the prevention

of sexual violence against children by providers of education and childcare services (e.g., daily safety measures such as interviews and consultations with children and employee training, as well as background checks of certain sexual criminal records).

(4) Holding of the G7 Hiroshima Summit and Ministerial Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

In 2023, Japan chaired the G7 Hiroshima Summit and the G7 Ministerial Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

(a) Holding of the G7 Hiroshima Summit

The Leaders' Communiqué referred to gender in three specific paragraphs as well as in a wide range of contexts, including the preamble, development, food security, labor, education, digital, human rights, terrorism, and regional affairs. It also committed to achieving a society in which all people can enjoy a vibrant life free from violence and discrimination regardless of gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation, to strengthening the "Women, Peace and Security (WPS)" agenda, and to applying WPS to disaster management.

Furthermore, in March 2023, the Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC)—an external consultative body that makes recommendations on gender equality to the G7 leaders—was formed and its four-pillar recommendations (economic empowerment, education, peacebuilding, and data) were submitted to Prime Minister Kishida.

(b) Holding of the G7 Ministerial Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

At the G7 in 2023, which Japan presided over, the first G7 Ministerial Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment was held in Japan. The meeting was held with an awareness that it is important to fundamentally strengthen initiatives toward women's economic independence in light of the unprecedented relevance of addressing the issue due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The outcome of the discussions was compiled into the Joint Statement of the G7 Gender Equality Ministers (Nikko Statement). The main points of the Statement are as follows:

- i. Based on the recognition that the spread of COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on women and girls, summarizes the structural issues surrounding gender equality, such as the bias toward women in unpaid care and household service work, and the positive changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as progress in the use of ICTs.
- ii. Clearly states the importance of initiatives to promote women's economic independence, such as expanding the number of women appointed as executives, supporting women's labor mobility to growth industries such as the digital sector through reskilling and STEM education, and providing support for women entrepreneurs.
- iii. Affirms that, with regard to addressing gender-based violence, violence and discrimination against women are factors that hinder women's economic independence, and that measures must be taken against online violence, which has become increasingly serious in recent years, and other forms of violence with the goal of eradicating all forms of gender-based violence.
- iv. Affirms its commitment to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, and the importance of increasing the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in decision-making roles in all spheres and at all levels, including peacebuilding and disaster response.
- v. Affirms that, in order to resolve various issues, it is important to take an approach that fully takes into consideration "intersectionality," where various intersecting characteristics such as

gender, age, and disability are compounded and the challenges that hinder gender equality are exacerbated.

(5) Challenges

As a result of the efforts described so far, some progress has been made in gender equality and women's empowerment in Japan; however, the following examples of issues still remain, and the government recognizes that it is necessary to continue to carry out initiatives to resolve these issues.

- Stereotyped perception of gender roles and unconscious bias still remaining
- The percentage of women in the managerial position being low compared to other countries
- Pay differences between men and women
- The large number of women among those working in unstable non-regular employment
- Disproportionate burden of household work, childcare, and nursing care borne by women
- Health problems specific to women during life stages such as pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause
- Situation in which victims of violence by spouses or intimate partners, sexual crimes, and sexual violence have difficulty accessing consultation services

The Fifth Basic Plan covers the period until the end of FY2025, and the Council for Gender Equality is currently in the process of following up on the Fifth Basic Plan in order to formulate the Sixth Basic Plan for Gender Equality for the next period. As was the case when the Fifth Basic Plan was formulated, the Council will continue to discuss the basic concept for the formulation of the new plan, while widely listening to the opinions of civil society.

2. Over the past five years, what have been the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programs?

(1) Strengthening of Measures Related to Violence Against Women

Violence by spouses or intimate partners, sexual crimes, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and any other forms of violence against women are grave violations of human rights and will never be tolerated.

According to the Cabinet Office's "Survey on Violence between Men and Women" released in March 2024, 13.2% of women who have been married have experienced spousal violence multiple times. Furthermore, as many as 8.1% of women have been victimized by non-consensual sexual intercourse, and the situation remains serious. In light of this context, the Government of Japan has been strongly working to enhance necessary support for various victims of gender-based violence and to eradicate all forms of violence against women.

First, regarding spousal violence, the Spousal Violence Prevention Act was amended in May 2023 (effective as of April 2024), and the amended Act provides for expanding the protection order system, including expansion of the scope of stay-away orders, etc., to cover cases of serious mental harm, and creating a system to strengthen multi-agency cooperation to provide continuous support from the occurrence of harm to the reconstruction of the victim's life.

Next, regarding sexual violence and sexual crimes, the Act on Punishment of Non-Consensual Recording of Sexual Images was established in June 2023, along with the amendment of the provisions on sexual crimes in the Penal Code. As a result, it is now clear that "sexual acts committed under conditions where it is difficult to make decisions freely" constitute a sexual crime under the provisions of the Penal Code and other laws related to sexual crimes, which eliminates variation in the determination

of whether some act constitutes a crime or not. Further, any “act of filming an individual in a sexually explicit manner against the person’s will or providing a record created thereby” is now punishable under the Act.

With regard to sexual violence against children by educational personnel, the Act on the Prevention of Sexual Violence against Children by Educational Personnel was established in May 2021, making it a violation of the law for any educational personnel to commit sexual violence against children, regardless of whether or not there is the consent of the child, assault, or intimidation, including acts that do not constitute a sexual offense under the Penal Code. It also obliges the national government, local governments, appointers of teachers, and schools to take measures for damage prevention, early detection, and response, etc. In June 2024, the Child Sexual Violence Prevention Act was established, which introduced measures such as mandating providers of education and childcare services to take measures to prevent sexual violence against children (e.g., daily safety measures such as interviews, consultations, and training, as well as background checks of certain sexual criminal records).

Moreover, in May 2022, the Act on Support for Women Facing Difficult Problems was established. The purpose of the related Anti-Prostitution Act had been to provide “correctional guidance and protection/rehabilitation for girls who are likely to engage in prostitution,” but the new Act clearly defines the perspective of “women’s welfare,” “respect for and protection of human rights,” and “gender equality,” and clearly states that the national and local governments have the responsibility to take necessary measures to support women facing difficult problems.

(2) Women’s Participation in Politics

Promotion of gender equality in the political field is critical for further reflecting public opinions in politics. Although women’s participation in the political field is gradually increasing, it is still behind other countries, and it is necessary to develop an environment where it is easier for both men and women to engage in activities such as running for office and serving as a Diet or local assembly member. Accordingly, the Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field was amended in June 2021 in order to promote political parties, etc. to implement more active efforts, and to strengthen the measures taken by the national and local governments.

This amendment resulted in the following: (A) relevant organizations were clearly specified to actively work on the promotion of gender equality in the political field under the appropriate division of roles; (B) provisions stating that political parties and other political organizations are to make voluntary efforts to set a goal for the number of male and female candidates, improve candidate selection methods, foster suitable persons to become candidates, and take measures against sexual harassment and harassment related to pregnancy or childbirth, etc., were set forth, with the aim of promoting efforts by political parties and other political organizations; and (C) provisions stating that the national and local governments are mandated to formulate and implement necessary measures for the promotion of gender equality in the political field, and to take measures such as the development of a system to support the balancing of the activities of a Diet or local assembly member and family life and the implementation of training programs that contribute to the prevention of sexual harassment and harassment related to pregnancy or childbirth, etc., were set forth, with the aim of strengthening measures taken by the national and local governments.

In line with the Act, the Government of Japan has been steadily promoting the following:

- The request to each political party to make voluntary efforts to set numerical targets pertaining to women candidates;
- The promotion of the development and utilization of training materials for the prevention of harassment in the political field; and

- “Visualization” of the number of women Diet or local assembly members and public relations regarding good practices in local assemblies where the ratio of women members has increased.

(3) Promotion of Women’s Advancement and Elimination of the Wage Gap

As a result of the government’s initiatives in collaboration with civil society and various other stakeholders based on the Fifth Basic Plan and the Act on the Promotion of Women’s Active Engagement in Professional Life, the movement around women’s empowerment is expanding throughout Japanese society, and society as a whole is beginning to change drastically.

For example, the number of women workers exceeded 30 million in 2019 and increased to 30.24 million in 2022. The labor force participation rate of women by age group has an M-shaped curve with the bottom at the “35 to 39” age group (78.9%), but the value at the bottom of the M-shaped curve has increased by 1.2 points from the previous year, which shows steady progress toward the resolution of the so-called M-shaped curve problem. The number of women who continue to work after the birth of their first child has been increasing every year, and at the latest, approximately 70% of those who were employed before the birth of their first child continue to work. The number of women executives in listed companies has increased by approximately 6.8 times in approximately 10 years since 2012. The percentage of women in the position of a division manager or equivalent in private companies (companies employing 100 or more regular workers) was 11.2% in 2018 and 13.9% in 2022, showing a steady increase.

Despite such progress, however, pay differences between men and women still exist when averaged across all workers as a whole, and the gap still remains large in comparison with that in other developed countries. In order to narrow this wage gap between men and women, legislation related to the Act on the Promotion of Women’s Active Engagement in Professional Life was amended in July 2022 to make the publication of “pay differences between men and women” mandatory, targeting general employers with 301 or more regularly employed workers. Furthermore, the Project Team for the Promotion of Women’s Active Engagement in Professional Life was established in the Prime Minister’s Office in April 2024. Upon investigating the actual conditions of industries with significant pay differences between men and women, mainly in large companies, and identifying key issues, the Project Team discussed measures to develop the workplace environment to resolve the pay differences between men and women and further promote women’s empowerment.

In order to foster an environment where women can further increase their income, efforts will continue to be made to create an environment where women can work according to their preferences by narrowing the gender gap through the promotion of reskilling and “visualization” of the wage gap, promoting regular employment and eliminating “annual income barriers.”

(4) Promotion of Taking Childcare Leave

It is important to realize work-life balance through reducing long working hours and diverse and flexible work styles that respond to life events, and for men to participate in childcare/nursing care. This enables both men and women who wish to work according to their preferences to continue working without being forced to choose either work or childcare/nursing care, and to fully leverage their capabilities.

Therefore, the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act and other acts were amended in June 2021 to take measures such as the establishment of a framework for childcare leave that enables workers to take two separate leaves of up to four weeks within eight weeks in the period immediately after the birth of their child, in addition to the regular childcare leave (which can be taken until the child reaches one year of age, in principle). The amended acts make it mandatory to develop an employment environment that makes it easier for workers to take childcare leave and to take measures to inform

workers individually and confirm their intention regarding leave, and to develop necessary provisions regarding childcare leave benefits, in order to prevent workers from leaving their jobs due to childbirth and childcare and enable both men and women to balance work and childcare according to their preferences.

In particular, to promote the use of childcare leave by men, the government is publicizing a framework for flexible childcare leave in the period immediately after the birth of a child, which has been named “Parental Leave”. Parental Leave enables men to take two separate leaves of up to four weeks within eight weeks after the birth of their child, in addition to the regular childcare leave (which can be taken until the child reaches one year of age, in principle). Furthermore, the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act and other laws were amended in May 2024 to take measures such as expansion of measures to realize flexible work styles according to the age of the child and expansion of the system to disclose the rate of male employees taking childcare leave.

(5) Efforts from the Perspective of Gender Equality in Disaster Response

Japan has experienced various natural disasters including the Noto Peninsula Earthquake on January 1, 2024, as well as the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, and the Nankai Trough Earthquake and other large-scale disasters are expected to occur in the future; despite such circumstances, initiatives for disaster prevention and reconstruction from the perspective of gender equality have not yet been fully disseminated. There have been initiatives carried out to deal with infectious diseases in the management of evacuation shelters, etc. in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is important that the perspectives of gender equality be reflected upon these initiatives as well.

Active participation of women in decision-making processes for disaster prevention and at disaster response scenes is extremely important for realizing a society that is resilient to disasters and for responding to disasters with due consideration to the differences in needs and impacts that women and men experience from disasters. To this end, the “Women's Perspective for Strengthening Disaster Response Capability: Guidelines for disaster prevention and reconstruction from the perspective of gender equality” was formulated in May 2020 for local government officials responsible for on-site disaster response, and practices based thereon are promoted not only during times of disaster, but also in normal times. In addition, the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security Third Edition formulated in 2023 also includes the promotion of women’s participation in initiatives for disaster risk reduction, disaster response and climate change, as well as the promotion of initiatives from a gender perspective, as one of its priorities.

3. Over the past five years, what specific actions have you taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls?

The Fifth Basic Plan also includes “Offering Support to Tackle Poverty and Other Livelihood Difficulties from a Gender Perspective” as Field 6, and measures have been taken such as providing support for women facing poverty and other livelihood difficulties, developing an environment where older persons, persons with disabilities, foreign residents, etc., can live in peace and security, and supporting those who face compounded difficulties due to the fact that they are women.

(1) Women Living in Rural Areas

The Fifth Basic Plan and the Basic Plan for Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas approved by the Cabinet in March 2020 set forth the following:

- Promotion of women's participation in management;
- Fostering of women agriculture, forestry, and fisheries workers who will lead the local community;
- Promotion of women's participation in the formulation of policies related to rural areas and communities;
- Development of an environment in which women can work comfortably;
- Alleviation of the burden of childcare/nursing care; and
- Initiatives to change the stereotyped perception of gender roles.

In accordance with the Basic Plan for Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas, projects promote women's participation in agricultural management, foster women agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers to lead regions, and promote women's participation in policy making related to rural areas.

Specifically, in order to develop agriculture and revitalize the local economies by empowering women farmers, the government supports efforts by prefectures to foster the regional leadership of women farmers, organize women's groups, create an environment where women can work comfortably, and disseminate examples of women farmers' activities.

Furthermore, the Agricultural Committees Act, the Agricultural Cooperatives Act, the Fishery Industry Cooperative Association Act, and the Forest Owners' Cooperative Associations Act have been amended to set forth that consideration should be given to ensuring that there is no significant age or gender imbalance among agricultural committee members or directors of the cooperatives. In addition to this, it was decided to conduct an annual survey on the appointment of women to higher positions in agricultural committees and agricultural cooperatives and to publicize the results. It was also decided to encourage the appointment of women to higher positions in land improvement districts.

(2) Women and Girls with Disabilities

With regard to women with disabilities, in response to the Fifth Basic Programme for Persons with Disabilities established in March 2023 and the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality, consideration is given to gender balance in the selection of members with disabilities for national councils, etc. that deliberate on measures for persons with disabilities, and the number and ratio of women members with disabilities are regularly surveyed and publicized. In addition, information has been disseminated based on the contents of the "Women's Perspective for Strengthening Disaster Response Capability: Guidelines for disaster prevention and reconstruction from the perspective of gender equality," etc., in order to promote the consideration given to women, including those with disabilities, in initiatives for disaster prevention and reconstruction to be undertaken in the disaster prevention systems of local governments during normal times, and evacuation shelters and emergency temporary housing after the occurrence of a disaster. Furthermore, through the government's Campaign for Eliminating Violence against Women and other projects, the government will further promote a national movement to prevent and eliminate violence against women, including those with disabilities. The government is also working to stabilize the operation of One-stop Support Centers for Victims of Sexual Crimes and Sexual Violence (hereinafter "One-stop Support Centers") in which the government is involved, as well as to enhance training systems for counselors, etc., and the consultation functions at the Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Centers and other facilities in order to enhance the support system for victims of sexual crimes, sexual violence, and violence by spouses or intimate partners, including for those with disabilities.

(3) Promotion of Public Understanding of Diversity of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

In June 2023, the Act on the Promotion of Public Understanding of Diversity of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity was established. In light of the current situation where public understanding of diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity is not necessarily sufficient, the purpose of this Act is to provide for fundamental principles for the promotion of measures to promote public understanding of diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity, and to clarify the roles and other matters for the national and local governments. By establishing a basic plan and specifying other necessary matters, it aims to foster a spirit of acceptance of diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity, thereby contributing to the realization of a society that is tolerant of diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Regarding the context of schools, issues and responses concerning sexual minorities were newly added to the revised Student Guidance Guidelines published in December 2022, and initiatives have been implemented to ensure appropriate measures through means such as distribution of training videos for teachers and school staff, preparation and dissemination of pamphlets for teachers and school staff to raise awareness, and issuance of notices to boards of education, etc.

As for the labor field, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare's guidelines on power harassment clearly state that offensive words and actions related to sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace and divulgence of a worker's sexual orientation or gender identity can also constitute harassment. In addition, the development of a system for consultation from workers is also included in the employers' obligation to take necessary measures for employment management, and a pamphlet for employers has been prepared to make this known to the public.

Furthermore, a free telephone consultation service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, as a consultation service for people with various problems in their daily lives. The service also offers a dedicated phone number for sexual minorities and, when necessary, provides face-to-face consultations and accompanies them when they consult with various specialized agencies.

(4) Young Women

For young women, the following efforts have been made in Field 6 of the Fifth Basic Plan.

- Career and vocational education is systematically enhanced in order to develop human resources who can stand on their own feet as a professional or working member of society. In addition to conveying the importance of financial independence for both men and women, including the provision of guidance on career paths and employment, education is promoted for them to be able to look at their lives from a long-term perspective, position their work in their lives, and prepare for it through effective use of the "Career Passport"—a teaching material that enables them to describe and review their own learning process—and other means.
- To enable fulfilling working lives for young people, the government is making efforts to understand the actual status of employment in detail, such as by gender, and provides support for new school graduates, takes measures for school dropouts and graduates who have not yet been employed, and provides support for young people working in non-regular employment including part-time workers.
- In order for children and young people with difficulties, such as NEETs and those who have socially withdrawn, to be able to live sound social lives, continuous support that suits the actual conditions of the community is provided by ways such as combining multiple support systems through cooperation among various entities at the comprehensive consultation center for children and young people, the local youth support station, and the regional support center for socially withdrawn people, etc.

- Since FY2022, The national government has been providing necessary expenses to advanced initiatives carried out by local governments to detect young caregivers at an early stage and provide necessary support, based on the results of surveys of children and young people and the report compiled by the “Project Team for the Cooperation among Welfare, Family Care, Medical Care, and Education to Support Young Caregivers” co-chaired by the State Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare and the State Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The support includes measures such as providing support for household work and childcare to families with young caregivers, etc., conducting fact-finding surveys at the local government level, providing training for staff members of relevant organizations and groups, etc., assigning coordinators, and peer support. In addition to these efforts, the national government has been providing support for forming networks among recipients of support and supporters and conducting intensive public relations and awareness-raising activities to enhance social recognition.

Moreover, because sexual crimes and sexual violence against children and young people have long-term harmful effects on the physical and mental health of the victims, the national government has been working to raise awareness of and promote the “life safety education” with the aim of enabling children and young people to recognize sexual violence and preventing them from becoming perpetrators, victims, or bystanders of sexual crimes and sexual violence. The government has also been promoting the development of systems that enable children and young people to easily access consultations and receive appropriate protection and support.

(5) Older Women

The number of men and women aged 65 and over who live alone is on the rise, and the poverty rate of older single women is largely influenced by factors such as their relation to work before reaching advanced age and their family structure. It is necessary for initiatives to take into account the emerging impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other serious events as well as the impact of the socioeconomic situation in which gender disparities in various fields have continued to be rigid and fixed for many years.

Specifically, the national government has been expanding coverage of employees’ insurance from the viewpoint of increasing resilience to poverty for older women during their working years, and has already been taking measures for older persons such as the system of supplementing allowance for pensioners and measures to reduce the burden of insurance premiums in medical insurance and long-term care insurance. Supplementing allowance for pensioners utilizes the amount obtained from the consumption tax rate increase and is paid in addition to the pension to those whose income from public pensions and other sources is below a certain standard amount, for the purpose of supporting their livelihood. To ensure that women who are not yet advanced in age are able to adequately prepare for their life transition, steady progress has also been made in many fields, including the improvement of the treatment of non-regular employees and the promotion of support for the conversion to regular employees.

It is also necessary to allow women to choose diverse and flexible work styles that accommodate childbirth, childcare, and nursing care in order to enable them to work with a long-term outlook, while paying attention to the increasing number of older working women and the issue of harassment against women. Furthermore, the national government has been promoting the creation of communities where older persons can live in safety, security, and affluence and building a social infrastructure in order to contribute to the prevention of social isolation. A “Survey on the Elderly’s Health” was conducted in 2022 based on the Guideline of Measures for Ageing Society (approved by the Cabinet in February 2018)

to understand the health conditions of older persons, their access to information via the Internet, and their attitudes and lived conditions such as views on life purpose.

(6) Refugee and Internally Displaced Women and Girls

In cases of female refugee applicants who make claims of sexual abuse, etc., the inquiry is basically handled by a female refugee inquirer, and when interviewing applicants regardless of their gender, the inquirer is made aware of the duty to engage with the applicants with sensitivity, giving due attention to their mental care, depending on the nature of the past persecution in their home country, so that the inquirer can respond to the applicants with a view to their human rights. In addition, in cases of an application for refugee recognition by a woman who is a victim of assault or threat that took advantage of her situation of vulnerability based on her gender, even if the Immigration Service Agency does not recognize her as a refugee, it takes necessary measures depending on the nature of the case. (e.g., permitting her to remain in country). As part of its efforts to increase the transparency of the refugee status recognition system and to enhance the credibility of the system, the Immigration Services Agency formulated the Guide to Eligibility Determination for Refugee Status in March 2023, which has been utilized in the Agency's refugee status recognition procedure, and is working to make Japan's refugee status recognition system more widely understood.

4. Over the past five years, how has the confluence of different crises affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what measures have you taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls?

Over the past five years, Japan has been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters, which have hindered the promotion of women's empowerment. Efforts to address each crisis are described below.

(1) Utilization of the Subsidies for Women's Empowerment in Regions during the COVID-19 Pandemic, etc.

The regional subsidies for women's empowerment, which have been used to promote initiatives for women's empowerment according to the actual conditions of the community and to support the independence of women facing difficulties, have been expanded to cover initiatives that help women who are suffering from unwanted loneliness and isolation due to COVID-19 to regain ties and connections with society.

In response to concerns about the increase and exacerbation of domestic violence, a new domestic violence consultation service was established in April 2020. This service offers 24-hour telephone consultation as well as consultation by e-mail and social media; in particular, the social media consultation is available in 10 languages (English, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Portuguese, Tagalog, Thai, Vietnamese, Indonesian, and Nepalese).

(2) Guidelines for Disaster Prevention and Reconstruction from the Perspective of Gender Equality

In 2015, the basic principles of disaster risk reduction, promotion of women's leadership, and participation and capacity building of women were laid out in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, adopted by the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.

Initiatives based on the "Women's Perspective for Strengthening Disaster Response Capability: Guidelines for disaster prevention and reconstruction from the perspective of gender equality" (May 2020) have been promoted from the perspective of gender equality in disaster response in normal

times. In the Noto Peninsula Earthquake on January 1, 2024, the national government requested the affected areas' local departments and bureaus in charge of gender equality to take actions based on the Guidelines in cooperation with the local gender equality centers, on the day of the earthquake.

In addition to the above, initiatives from the perspective of gender equality have been promoted in disaster response based on the Fifth Basic Plan, the Third WPS Action Plan, etc.

5. Over the next five years, what are the priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programs?

Gender equality is an important and steadfast policy of the Government of Japan and a norm shared by the international community. It is also an essential element in realizing a society where all people can fully leverage their individuality and capability and live a worthwhile life where diversity is respected, bringing innovation to Japan's economy and society, and ensuring its sustainable development. Under this recognition, the government has been implementing measures based on the Basic Plan (currently under the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality (FY2021 to FY2025)) and the Basic Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women formulated around June of each year.

Issues and priorities for FY2026 and thereafter will be specified in the Sixth Gender Equality Basic Plan and the formulation of the plan will be carried out in the same manner as in the past, listening to the opinions of civil society widely through public hearings and public comments. Although it is premature and difficult to describe priorities for FY2026 and thereafter at the time of preparing this report, the government intends to further promote initiatives toward the realization of a society indicated by the Basic Act for Gender Equal Society established based on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in cooperation with civil society, in line with the Sixth Basic Plan to be approved by the Cabinet after deliberations by the Council for Gender Equality, which is one of the Cabinet Office's important policy councils, for the five-year period from FY2026.

The latest edition of the Basic Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women 2024 specifies the following four main issues to be addressed:

I. Further promotion of active participation by women in companies, etc.: Development of women human resources who participate actively and human resources who implement initiatives in companies and other organizations

- (1) Strengthening recruitment, development, and appointment of women in companies
- (2) Promotion of women's participation in science, technology, and academic areas
- (3) Support for women entrepreneurs

II. Further advancement of initiatives to increase women's income and achieve their economic empowerment: Develop the capacity of women throughout Japan to achieve economic empowerment and nurture the human resources to support this

- (1) Promotion of increased income and reskilling for women
- (2) Support for workers in balancing work with childcare or long-term care for older or sick relatives
- (3) Support for women in balancing work with health issues
- (4) Promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women at the regional level

III. Realization of a society that can safeguard individual dignity, as well as safety and peace of mind: Conduct disaster management and reconstruction from the perspective of gender equality and development of human resources to support the victims of spousal violence, sexual crime, and sexual violence

- (1) Advancement of disaster management and reconstruction from the perspective of gender equality
- (2) Reinforcement of measures against spousal violence, sexual crime, and sexual violence
- (3) Provision of support for women facing difficult problems
- (4) Provision of support for lifelong health

IV. Further acceleration of initiatives to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women:
Develop women human resources who will participate in policymaking and planning processes in every sphere

- (1) Promotion of formulation of governmental plans from the perspective of gender equality
- (2) Promotion of gender equality in the field of politics and public administration

Section Three: Progress Across the 12 Critical Areas of Concern

Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

Critical areas of concern:

- A. Women and poverty
- F. Women and the economy
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

6. Over the past five years, what actions has your country taken to advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and non-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship)?

(1) Promotion of Women's Empowerment in Professional Life

The amended Act on the Promotion of Women's Active Engagement in Professional Life came into effect in 2022 and the scope of the obligation to establish and notify of a General Employer Action Plan and to publicize information regarding women's active engagement in professional life in the business was expanded from general employers with 301 or more regularly employed workers to general employers with 101 or more regularly employed workers.

In addition, regarding items for publication of information, general employers with 301 or more regularly employed workers are mandated to publicize one or more items (two or more items in total) from each of the categories of (A) achievements in the provision of opportunities for professional life of women workers whom they employ or intend to employ, and (B) achievements in development of an employment environment that contributes to the creation of a balance between professional and personal life of workers they employ, and general employers with 101 or more regularly employed workers are mandated to publicize one or more items from all of (A) and (B). The Act thereby seeks to enhance the publication of information related to women's empowerment.

Although the pay differences between men and women in Japan have been narrowing over the long term, the gap is still large compared to other developed countries. In order to further narrow the gap in light of the current state of pay differences between men and women, legislation related to the Act on the Promotion of Women's Active Engagement in Professional Life was amended in 2022, and the item "pay differences between men and women" was added to the items for publication of information. The publication of this item was made mandatory for general employers with 301 or more regularly employed workers and specified employers (e.g., national government and local government organizations).

In addition, building on the certification of employers with excellent status in promoting women's empowerment (Eruboshi certification), a higher-level "Platinum Eruboshi" certification has been established.

Besides the above, the Digital Human Resources Development Plan for Women was decided at the Council for Gender Equality in April 2022 to accelerate the development of women human resources with digital skills that can directly lead to employment in order to help women in difficult circumstances under the COVID-19 pandemic gain employment and increase their income. This Plan is a three-year intensive effort to develop women digital human resources in cooperation with the relevant ministries and agencies and is a comprehensive measure that includes specific provisions from the perspective of both improving digital skills and supporting employment in the digital field. The main points of the Plan are as follows:

- Promote women's entry into the digital field by broadening the entrance to the field, including providing support for the acquisition of basic digital literacy;

- Develop an environment in which women who cannot work full-time due to childcare or long-term care, etc. can work flexibly in the digital field; and
- Roll out public-private coordination initiatives throughout all regions of Japan by strongly implementing familiarization and awareness-raising activities among local governments and companies.

Furthermore, based on the “Economic Measures for Overcoming COVID-19 and Opening Up a New Era” (approved by the Cabinet on November 19th, 2021), necessary measures were taken to raise the salaries of nursery teachers, kindergarten teachers, and long-term care and welfare service workers by approximately 3% and nursing staff by approximately 1%.

(2) Anti-harassment Measures

Power harassment, sexual harassment, and other forms of harassment in the workplace not only hinder workers from fully leveraging their capability, but are also unacceptable acts related to human rights, which may unreasonably harm an individual’s dignity and personhood. For companies, harassment is a major problem that can disrupt order in the workplace, interfere with business operations, lead to the loss of valuable human resources, and adversely affect social reputation.

According to the Fact-Finding Survey on Harassment in the Workplace conducted by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2023, 19.3% of workers answered that they had experienced power harassment in the past three years. In addition, the number of consultations regarding “power harassment” at prefectural labor bureaus in FY2023 exceeded 60,000 cases and countermeasures have become an urgent issue.

Under these circumstances, following the amendment of the Act on the Comprehensive Promotion of Labor Measures in May 2019, it is now employers’ obligation to take measures to prevent power harassment as of June 2020 for large companies and April 2022 for small- and medium-sized companies.

Similarly, provisions regarding sexual harassment and harassment based on pregnancy, childbirth, childcare leave, etc., in the Equal Employment Opportunity Act and the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act were partially amended to strengthen measures to prevent harassment in the workplace, such as prohibiting disadvantageous treatment due to having had consulted about harassment and clarifying the responsibilities of the national government, employers, and workers.

(3) Improvement of Treatment of Non-regular Workers and Support for Their Conversion to Regular Employees

While part-time work and other non-regular employment has positive significance in meeting diverse employment needs, it can be problematic in that the percentage of non-regular workers among female workers is higher than that of male workers, which is one of the factors contributing to poverty among women and disparities in treatment between men and women. The national government is working to improve the treatment of non-regular workers by eliminating unreasonable differences in treatment between regular and non-regular workers within the same company or organization, etc., and is also promoting initiatives to convert non-regular workers to regular workers.

Part-time work and fixed-term employment are suitable for workers with diverse needs and situations, including those who have limited working hours due to various reasons such as childcare/nursing care. On the other hand, there are also a number of workers who have no choice but to work as part-time workers or fixed-term employees due to a lack of opportunities to work as regular employees. In addition, there are situations where treatment is not always commensurate with their work and contributions.

Accordingly, the Act on Improvement of Personnel Management and Conversion of Employment Status for Part-Time Workers and Fixed-Term Workers (Part-Time and Fixed-Term Workers Act) (effective as of

April 2021) was amended pursuant to the Act on the Arrangement of Related Acts to Promote Work Style Reform, aiming to resolve these issues and develop an employment environment in which part-time workers and fixed-term workers can leverage their capability more effectively, as well as to “realize fair treatment” that enables people working in various forms of employment and working styles to fully leverage their aspirations and skills and be treated according to their work and contributions.

In addition, with regard to equal pay for equal work for dispatched workers, following the June 2018 amendment of the Act on Ensuring the Proper Operation of Worker Dispatching Services and Protecting Dispatched Workers (Worker Dispatching Act), staffing providers are mandated, as of April 1st, 2020, to ensure either equal and balanced treatment with the client’s regular workers or treatment based on a labor-management agreement that meets certain requirements.

Moreover, a system was established in which employers are subsidized if they implement measures to convert non-regular employees to regular employees or to improve the treatment of non-regular employees (e.g., by newly setting forth or applying wage rules, etc., common to both fixed-term employees and regular employees) to promote the career advancement of fixed-term employees, short-time workers, dispatched workers, and other non-regular employees in their companies as “career advancement subsidies.”

7. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers?

(1) Support for Balancing Work and Family Life

The Child Care and Family Care Leave Act was amended in June 2021 to take measures such as the establishment of a framework for flexible childcare leave in the period immediately after the birth of their child, making it mandatory to develop an employment environment that makes it easier for workers to take childcare leave and to take measures to inform workers individually and confirm their intention regarding leave, and to develop necessary provisions regarding childcare leave benefits, in order to prevent workers from leaving their jobs due to childbirth and childcare and enable both men and women to balance work and childcare according to their preferences. Specifically, the following measures were implemented step-by-step from April 1st, 2022:

1. Establishment of a framework for flexible childcare leave in the period immediately after the birth of a child in order to promote the use of childcare leave by men
2. Development of an employment environment that makes it easier for workers to take childcare leave and making it mandatory to individually inform workers who report pregnancy or childbirth about the childcare leave system and to confirm their intention to take such leave
3. Option to take childcare leave separately
4. Mandatory publicization of the status of childcare leave taken
5. Relaxation of requirements for fixed-term workers to take childcare or nursing care leave

In terms of childcare services, the New Plan for Raising Children in a Peaceful Environment (released on December 21st, 2020) was compiled in order to resolve the number of children on daycare waiting lists as soon as possible and to respond to the further increase in women’s employment rate. Based on this Plan, in addition to the development of childcare support services, the government is promoting the securing of nursery teachers by improving the attractiveness of jobs and workplaces and the utilization of all local

childcare resources including kindergartens and babysitters. As of April 1st, 2024, the number of children on daycare waiting lists was 2,567.

Furthermore, the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act, etc. was amended in May 2024 to enable both men and women to balance work and childcare/nursing care by taking measures such as expanding measures to realize flexible work styles according to the age of the child, expanding the scope of mandatory publication of the status of childcare leave taken, promoting and strengthening next-generation development support measures, and strengthening the support system for balancing work and nursing care in order to prevent separation from employment due to nursing care, etc. Specifically, the following will come into effect step-by-step from April 1st, 2025:

- Mandating employers to take measures to understand the needs of the workplace and realize flexible work styles for workers raising preschool children aged three years or older and to enable the workers to have a choice in using such measures, as well as to inform each worker about such measures and confirming the worker's intention
- Expanding the scope of the mandatory publication of the status of childcare leave taken to employers who employ more than 300 regularly employed workers (currently set at more than 1,000)
- Mandating employers to individually inform workers who report that they are facing nursing care for a family member, etc., about the support system for balancing work and nursing care and confirm their intention

In the area of long-term care, the Government of Japan has been advocating for no one forced to leave their jobs for long-term care since 2015, and has been working with the aim of resolving the issue of those who are forced to leave their jobs due to lack of access to long-term care services and older people waiting at home despite their need to be admitted to an Intensive Care Home for the Elderly.

In particular, since FY2020, the government has used the increased consumption tax revenue as a financial resource and subsidized the following: the cost of repairing and seismic retrofitting of facilities and the cost of developing accommodation facilities for long-term care workers, including foreign nationals, from the viewpoint of quantitative expansion of long-term care services; facility renovation costs for the purpose of securing private rooms for end-of-life care and accommodations for family members, etc., from the viewpoint of qualitative improvement of long-term care services; and the cost of facility renovation, etc., for the purpose of accepting children or persons with disabilities at long-term care facilities to promote interactions between children, persons with disabilities, and older persons.

(2) Measures to Protect the Spouse's Right of Residence when Divorced or Widowed

As the standard, one party to a divorce has been entitled to demand that the other party distribute property to him/her based on the provisions of the Civil Code under the purposes of: (1) equitable distribution of property shared by spouses in the course of living together; (2) securing livelihood after divorce; and (3) compensation for damages for having caused the divorce. In addition, with regard to pensions, it is possible to split the Employees' Pension Insurance record acquired during the marriage between the parties to the divorce. In particular, for national pension category-3 insured persons supported by a spouse who is a company employee or a public employee, half of the spouse's Employees' Pension Insurance record can be split (only after 2008 when the system started operating), based on the basic recognition that the insurance premiums paid by the spouse were jointly paid by both the spouses. This means that half of the Employees' Pension Insurance premiums paid by the spouse is considered to be the contribution of the dependent.

The provisions of the Civil Code pertaining to inheritance were amended in July 2018, and from the viewpoint of giving consideration to the livelihood of the surviving spouse, provisions regarding Spouse's Right of Residence and Spouse's Right of Short-Term Residence were newly established (effective as of April 2020), covering buildings owned by the decedent in which the spouse was residing at the time the inheritance commenced.

The Spouse's Right of Residence enables the surviving spouse who has resided in a building owned by the decedent to continue to live in the building without paying rent after the decedent's death, based on the decedent's will or division of the estate, etc. The Spouse's Right of Short-Term Residence enables the surviving spouse who has resided in the building owned by the decedent for free to continue to live in the building for a certain period of time (e.g., six months from the commencement of inheritance) for free.

In addition, under this amendment, in the case where the building or the premise used for residence (real property used for residence) is transferred as a legacy or gift between spouses married for the period of 20 years or longer, it is not, in principle, required to be treated as having received an estate in advance (special benefit) in the calculation. The amendment came into effect in July 2019.

(3) Publication of Monetary Valuation of Unpaid Work

The government has periodically measured the value of unpaid work for the purpose of comparing the value of household service work and volunteer activities with GDP and other purposes. In response to the release of the 2021 edition of the Survey on Time Use and Leisure Activities, the amounts of monetary valuation of unpaid work were estimated using the latest data, the results of which were compiled and released in May 2023. The summary of the results is as follows.

		Unpaid work	Housework activities	Volunteer activities
Amounts of monetary valuation (opportunity cost method) (one billion yen)	2021	145,926	143,599	2,327
	2016	143,084	138,496	4,588
	Rate of change from 2016 to 2021	2.0%	3.7%	-49.3%
Amounts of monetary valuation (replacement cost method, specialist approach) (one billion yen)	2021	121,608	118,920	2,688
	2016	111,955	106,755	5,200
	Rate of change from 2016 to 2021	8.6%	11.4%	-48.3%
Hours of activity (one million hours)	2021	92,628	91,211	1,417
	2016	93,058	90,213	2,844
	Rate of change from 2016 to 2021	-0.5%	1.1%	-50.2%
Hourly wages valuation Opportunity cost method (yen/hour)	2021	1,575	1,574	1,642
	2016	1,538	1,535	1,613
	Rate of change from 2016 to 2021	2.5%	2.6%	1.8%
Hourly wages valuation Replacement cost method, specialist approach (yen/hour)	2021	1,313	1,304	1,897
	2016	1,203	1,183	1,828
	Rate of change from 2016 to 2021	9.1%	10.2%	3.8%

8. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce the gender digital divide?

(1) Digital Human Resources Development Plan for Women

The Digital Human Resources Development Plan for Women was decided by the Council for Gender Equality in April 2022, and relevant ministries and agencies are to work together to develop women digital human resources intensively for three years. Initiatives have been implemented as follows in accordance with the three main pillars of: (A) support for acquisition of digital skills; (B) employment support in the digital field; and (C) rolling out good practices nationwide.

(A) Support for Acquisition of Digital Skills

- Provision of digital skill educational content

Provide digital educational content for industry, academia, and government and on-site training programs in collaboration with local small- and medium-sized companies on the “Platform for Developing Digital Human Resources.”

- Improvement of digital skills through public vocational training courses

Promote the establishment of courses in the digital field, expand e-learning courses and provide training courses with childcare services to make it easier for women with time restrictions due to childcare, etc., to receive such training.

- Subsidies for vocational training provided by employers, etc. (subsidies for human resource development support, etc.)

Subsidize training expenses and other costs for vocational training, including in the digital field. Provide an additional subsidy if a non-regular worker who has completed a specific training program is converted to a full-time employee.

- Provision of practical programs at local educational institutions

Support practical programs to improve digital literacy, including those for women, at local universities, colleges of technology, and other schools.

- Support for those who are concerned about using digital technology, including middle-aged and older women

Hold seminars and dispatch lecturers on digital utilization, such as how to use smartphones for online administrative procedures, etc.

(B) Employment Support in the Digital Field

- Encouragement of initiatives to support employment corresponding to the actual conditions of the community

Encourage initiatives by local governments to support the acquisition of digital skills and employment utilizing such skills according to the actual conditions of the community by providing subsidies for women’s empowerment within regions.

- Provision of employment support in public vocational training courses

Provide employment consultation and employment support services to job seekers who have acquired digital skills through public vocational training courses. Promote training combined with practical training at companies and the incorporation of on-the-job training in order to reliably lead to employment.

- Regular adoption and promotion of remote work that leads to the creation of employment opportunities for women

Related ministries and local governments are to collaborate with one another to develop a nationwide introductory support system aiming at the regular adoption and promotion of remote work that enables flexible work styles and is easily compatible with shortened working hours and flexible working hours.

- Employment support in the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries industry fields

In addition to the development of an environment in which women can work comfortably, incorporate on-site training in conjunction with initiatives to develop human resources for smart agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, and thereby steadily increase employment in the sector.

(C) Familiarizing and Raising Awareness with the Aim of Nationwide Implementation

Strongly implement activities to familiarize the public with and raise awareness of the overall picture of initiatives related to the development of women digital human resources as well as good practices and the concepts behind them, with the aim of rolling out these initiatives throughout all regions of Japan.

(2) Expansion of Women's Participation in STEM Fields

Through the "Riko-challenges" (STEM Challenges) website, the Cabinet Office initiated the "Riko-challenge supporters," which consist of companies, universities, academic groups, and other organizations that support initiatives to develop women human resources in science and technology, and the "Riko-challenges support network," which consists of organizations that proactively undertake initiatives to support women in science and technology; provides information on events held by the organizations; and introduces messages from women who are actively working in the field of science and technology.

Since FY2017, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and the Japan Science and Technology Agency have co-hosted a symposium for female junior and senior high school students to promote their understanding of career paths after choosing a career in the science and technology fields through the introduction of role models, etc.

"Summer Riko-challenges" (events held by universities, companies, academic organizations, etc., during the summer vacation) have been supported by the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, and the Japan Business Federation, and 162 events were held by 96 organizations in FY2023, attended by approximately 6,300 people. The number of "Riko-challenge supporters" is 885 as of October 2023.

9. In the past five years, how has the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what macroeconomic policies has your country implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy?

Poverty Eradication, Social Protection, Social Services

Critical areas of concern:

- A. Women and poverty
- B. Education and training of women
- C. Women and health
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

10. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?

(1) Proactive Labor Market Policies and Targeted Measures

The government has been supporting employment of women by providing job training and through employment adjustment subsidies. In addition to public vocational training courses (Hello Training) that enable job seekers, including women, to acquire necessary job skills, etc., free of charge and provide employment insurance allowances and benefits to support their daily lives while attending training, specialized consultation centers (Mother's Hello Work) have been established to offer employment consultation and employment placement services to women who wish to find employment while raising their children. Through a website that supports women's reinstatement from maternity/childcare leave or their reemployment after leaving a job for childbirth and childcare, specialized counselors offer consultation services by e-mail for women who have been out of work for a certain period of time due to childcare, etc. The website also provides information on training and seminars regarding reemployment held in the community, as well as information on local nursery centers.

In particular, the following support has been provided to parents of single-parent families:

- Single-Mother Families, etc. Employment/Self-Reliance Support Centers Project
Provides consistent employment support services from employment consultation to employment support seminars and provision of employment information, etc., and consultation on child support payments and other livelihood support services.
- Single-Mother/Single-Father Self-Reliance Support Program Establishment Project
Formulates self-reliance support plans according to the situation and needs of each single-parent family, and provides in-depth support for self-reliance and employment in cooperation with Hello Work and other organizations.
- Self-Reliance Support Education and Training Benefit Program
An amount equivalent to 60% of the course fees (maximum annual amount of 200,000 yen or 400,000 yen (number of years of study x 400,000 yen, maximum of 1.6 million yen)) is provided to single mothers who have taken educational training courses designated by local governments (such as designated educational training courses under the employment insurance system's educational training benefits). If the participant acquires a qualification within one year after completion and

finds employment utilizing the qualification, an additional 25% of the course fee (maximum of 200,000 yen per year) will be paid (maximum of 85% payment).

- Advanced Vocational Training Promotion Benefit Program

For those who study at a training institute, etc., for six months or longer in order to acquire a qualification that will help them become economically independent, such as a registered nurse, etc., an “Advanced Vocational Training Promotion Benefit” (100,000 yen per month (70,500 yen per month for inhabitant tax-taxable households), maximum of four years, and additional 40,000 yen for the last 12 months until the completion of the course) is provided to alleviate the burden of living expenses.

- Support Program for Successful Examinees of the Upper Secondary School Equivalency Examination

At the time when a parent or child from a single-parent family starts taking a course to pass the Upper Secondary School Equivalency Examination, completes the course, and passes the examination, part of the course fees (maximum of 60%; maximum of 150,000 yen for correspondence course; and maximum of 300,000 yen for commuting course) will be paid.

(2) Expansion of Access to Land, Housing, Finance, Technology, and Agricultural Extension Services

In relation to expanding women’s access to technology, the Digital Human Resources Development Plan for Women (approved by the Council for Gender Equality on April 26th, 2022) was formulated. The Plan aims at promoting the establishment of courses in the digital field in public vocational training courses, and also covers qualifications in the digital field in the aforementioned “Self-Reliance Support Education and Training Benefit Program” and the “Advanced Vocational Training Promotion Benefit Program.”

To expand women’s access to agriculture, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has been implementing the “Nougyou-Joshi Project (Women Farmers Project)”. The project develops new products and services by linking the wisdom that women farmers have cultivated through their daily lives, work, and relationship with nature with the technologies, know-how, and ideas of various companies. The project also conducts seminars to provide opportunities for members to learn, works with educational institutions to nurture future women farmers, and disseminates information.

In addition, the Fifth Basic Plan aims to promote gender equality in local communities, and various initiatives are being developed to achieve targets (detailed in Q3).

(3) Support for Women’s Entrepreneurship and Business Development Activities

The Fifth Basic Plan sets a target to increase the percentage of women entrepreneurs from 27.7% (2017) to 30% or more (2025). In connection with this target, under the title of “Support Funds for Female and Young/Senior Entrepreneurs,” Japan Finance Corporation is offering loans at special interest rates to women who are starting a new business or have been in business for approximately seven years or less. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry operates the women entrepreneurs support network “My Cheerleaders for Starting a Business,” to share expertise and information among support organizations. However, the proportion of women among startup entrepreneurs is low, and there are some challenges that women entrepreneurs face. To comprehensively promote support for women entrepreneurs, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry announced the “Female Entrepreneurs Support Package” in May 2023, and as one part of this initiative, has built support networks for women entrepreneurs across Japan and implemented support programs aimed at matching them with supporters.

(4) Social Protection Programs for Women and Girls / Affordable Legal Services for Women Living in Poverty

In addressing poverty among single-parent households, especially single-mother households, it is important to ensure that all single-parent households who wish to receive child support payments are able to do so. Based on this recognition, in April 2023, the government established and announced a target to increase the overall receipt rate of child support payments (regardless of whether or not child support payment has been agreed upon) to 40% by 2031, and to increase the rate in those cases where child support payment has been agreed upon to 70%.

To achieve these targets, in the Basic Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women 2023, the following initiatives are set for promotion:

- Further promote awareness that it is the expected standard to pay child support payments after divorce by utilizing every possible opportunity, such as distributing pamphlets and uploading explanatory videos for awareness-raising and public relations purposes.
- Promote various consultation services at consultation support centers for child support payments and at local governments, etc., while strengthening consultation functions utilizing IT devices, such as by enabling 24-hour consultation response through chatbots.
- Promote stronger coordination between family registry departments and single-parent family support departments at local governments and provide push-type support by having the local government actively identify those who need support as a result of divorce.
- Expand the pre- and post-divorce parent support program and promote support measures to enhance support for parents before they get divorced and to secure child support payments. Specifically, implement measures such as preparation of a title of obligation by notarization, etc., expansion of opportunities to utilize private ADR, etc., by reducing the burden, and promotion of the use of private child support payment guarantee contracts by providing subsidies for guarantee fees, etc., as well as the creation and deployment of a collection of case studies to promote the use in each local government, and thereby increase the number of municipalities implementing the support.

Through the Act Partially Amending the Civil Enforcement Act and the Act for Implementation of the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, which came into effect as of April 2020, the scope of creditors who may file a petition regarding procedures for disclosing the debtor's property has been expanded and the penalties for debtors who fail to respond to a summons from the court have been strengthened. The Act has also newly established the procedures for obtaining information from third parties, making it possible to obtain information on the debtor's property from third parties other than the debtor. This has increased the effectiveness of the compulsory collection procedure when child support payments are unpaid.

Since April 2024, the Japan Legal Support Center (the JLSC) has implemented measures to expand its support for single parents, such as relaxing the requirements for exemption from reimbursement, etc., when a single parent uses civil legal aid to claim child support payments.

Further, the amended Civil Code was adopted in May 2024, which includes "Statutory Child Support," allowing a parent to claim child support payments even when there is no agreement by mutual consent at the time of divorce.

11. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls?

(1) Strengthening of Social Protection for Older Women

Regarding poverty among women of advanced age, the “system of supplementing allowance for pensioners” (effective as of October 2019) is used to provide those whose income is below a certain standard amount with an additional payment added to their pension with the aim of supporting their livelihood, as well as to reduce the burden of premiums in medical insurance and long-term care insurance.

Corresponding with other measures against no pension/low pension, measures are being taken to deter the occurrence of no pension/low pension, such as giving notice of an expected pension amount according to the results of payment, etc. Furthermore, past measures regarding late payment systems are being analyzed to take effective and efficient measures for the recommendation of making a late payment.

(2) Strengthening of Support for Single-Mother Household

Detailed in Q10 (1).

12. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country?

The Fifth Basic Plan has set the following numerical targets based on the recognition that it is necessary for women to act proactively to obtain accurate knowledge and information on their physical and mental health so that they can enjoy good health, and that the perspective of “reproductive health/rights” is vitally important due to the fact that the physical and mental condition of women varies greatly depending on their age..

Item	Status at the time of establishment (as of)	Achievement target (deadline)	Progress (as of)
Cervical cancer and breast cancer screening participation rates	Screening participation rates for the past two years Cervical cancer: 43.7% Breast cancer: 47.4% (2019)	Cervical cancer: 50% Breast cancer: 50% (By FY2022*)	Screening participation rates for the past two years Cervical cancer: 43.6% Breast cancer: 47.4% (2022)
Number of specialized infertility consultation centers	81 prefectures and cities (FY2020)	Established in all prefectures, designated cities, and core cities (FY2025)	96 prefectures and cities (FY2023)
Percentage of working women doctors between the ages of 25 and 44	31.8% (2018)	33.6% (as early as possible in the 2020s)	32.5% (2022)

*Calculation of the cervical cancer screening participation rate is for those aged 20 to 69 and the breast cancer screening participation rate is those aged 40 to 69. The targets for FY2022 and thereafter are set at 60% or higher respectively in the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Cancer Control Programs (4th period).

(1) Support for Pregnancy and Childbirth

The “Basic Policy on the Comprehensive Promotion of Measures for the Provision of Child Health and Development Care” was approved by the Cabinet (established in February 2021 and revised in March 2023) based on the “Act on the Comprehensive Promotion of Measures for the Continuous Provision of Necessary Health and Development Care for Persons in the Process of Growing Up, their Guardians, and

Expectant and Nursing Mothers” (Health and Development Care Basic Act) established in December 2018. The revised Policy presents basic ideas for the promotion of the following measures:

- Respect the right to healthy growth of individuals in the process of growing up and reproductive health rights (health and rights regarding sexuality and reproduction)
- Respect children’s opinions and give priority to the best interests of children
- Provide seamless health and development care from pregnancy to child rearing
- Accurately respond to demand and provide seamless health and development care, taking into consideration the perspective of those who are in the process of growing up, etc.
- Develop a system that enables correct diagnosis at the earliest stage possible
- Provide appropriate health and development care based on scientific knowledge
- Provide appropriate information suitable to the age of growing children, and develop an environment where mothers can give birth and raise their children with peace of mind

Specifically, a wide range of measures are being implemented based on the above-mentioned policies, including the following:

- Recommendation of pregnancy notification in the early stage and promotion of health care services such as health checkups for pregnant women by municipalities
- Increase of the childbirth lump-sum allowance to 500,000 yen as of April 2023 to reduce financial burden during pregnancy and childbirth
- Expansion of the scope of insurance coverage for infertility treatment as of April 2022
- Awareness-raising activities launched in January 2022 on the theme of balancing infertility treatment and work
- Subsidies to support balancing infertility treatment and work as of April 2021 to subsidize small- and medium-sized business owners who are working to develop a workplace environment that facilitates the balancing of infertility treatment and work

(2) Expansion of Women’s Participation in the Medical Field

In addition to promoting reforms in doctors’ work styles, initiatives are being implemented and expanded for the further empowerment of women doctors, such as support for their return to work, flexibility in working systems (shorter working hours, giving due consideration for night duty, etc.), promotion of team medical care, introduction of a multiple attending physician system, and development of in-hospital childcare and childcare services for sick children at medical institutions.

The government is also developing an environment to enable access to various childcare services throughout society, to ensure that women doctors’ empowerment is not hindered by unavailability of childcare services due to reasons such as differences in working patterns of part-time doctors and graduate school students working at university hospitals, operational problems such as difficulties in admission due to the timing of childbirth, and irregular work schedules due to emergency response. Different services include nursery centers, including in-house nursery centers and company-led childcare, childcare for sick children, and private baby-sitting services. After-school children’s clubs, transportation services, and other incidental needs are also taken into consideration and targeted for support in light of the uniqueness of the working styles and career paths of doctors and nurses as well as nursing care workers.

Measures such as services to help women doctors and nurses catch up on the latest medical and clinical knowledge and consultation and job placement services are being promoted in order to facilitate a

smooth return to work for those who have left for a certain period of time due to childcare or other reasons.

Initiatives such as career education for medical students and the presentation of various role models are promoted to eliminate the negative impact of stereotyped perceptions of gender roles and unconscious bias. Both men and women doctors are supported so that they can continue their careers in medicine.

In order to develop an environment in which women doctors can be fairly evaluated for their capability regardless of whether they have situations such as childbirth, childcare, or nursing care, the government is promoting the elimination of the negative impact of stereotyped perceptions of gender roles and unconscious bias, harassment prevention, and reformation of doctors' work styles and the review of the attending physician system to reduce long working hours, which can perpetuate the problem.

13. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented?

(1) Development of Training Programs

With regard to gender equality in primary and secondary schools, the government has developed a training program for teachers that offers guidance for their own teaching by encouraging them to realize their own unconscious biases, alongside presenting the basic principles and significance of gender equality, and to review daily educational activities and school management from a gender-equal perspective.

The training is conducted using illustration videos showing 11 familiar educational situations related to stereotyped perceptions of gender roles and unconscious bias.

The main targets of the training are elementary school teachers (initial and mid-career), junior high and senior high school teachers (initial and mid-career), and those in managerial positions/candidates for managerial positions, as well as teachers and staff of boards of education (managerial positions and middle leaders).

(2) Expansion of Women's Participation in STEM Fields

Based on the 6th Science, Technology and Innovation Basic Plan (approved by the Cabinet in March 2021), measures have been developed to promote the empowerment of women researchers. Specifically, at national universities, evaluation of the president's managerial achievements includes initiatives aimed at creating faculty organizations with diverse human resources including women researchers and initiatives to encourage female students to enter science and technology departments, among others, and are reflected in the allocation of subsidies for operation expenses. For private universities, the "Subsidy for Current Expenditures of Private Universities, etc." provides support for women researchers and other researchers in their child-rearing period and supports initiatives implemented by private universities and others that provide support for women researchers, such as the establishment of flexible working systems.

Particularly with regard to women's participation in STEM fields, efforts have been made as part of the "Riko-challenges" (STEM Challenges) targeting female students, their parents, and teachers, etc., in cooperation with universities, research institutions, academic organizations, and companies by: raising awareness of the benefits of choosing the science and technology field; holding events to provide opportunities for close-up exposure to future work in the science and technology field, such as workplace

tours, work experience, and interaction with women engineers and researchers; and dispatching STEM Girls Ambassadors who are active at the forefront for empowerment in the science and technology field. In recent years, based on the results of the “Survey on Regional Characteristics of Career Choice of Female Students in Science and Engineering Fields” (2021), focus has been placed on regions with a population of less than 50,000 where there are few higher education institutions in the vicinity.

14. What actions has your country taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated?

The Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office held a “Study Group on the Impact on Women and Issues under COVID-19” in September 2020, consisting of experts from various fields, to understand the impact of the spread of COVID-19 on women’s employment, livelihood, etc., and policy issues from women’s perspective. In November of the same year, the study group submitted emergency proposals consisting of the following eight items to the Minister in charge of Women’s Empowerment and Minister of State for Gender Equality. The proposals were reflected in the economic measures of the government and implemented through measures such as the third supplementary budget for FY2020.

- Promptly strengthen the consultation system and countermeasures for domestic violence, sexual violence, suicide, etc., and perform necessary functions as much as possible even during the spread of an infectious disease
- Give maximum consideration to the impact on women and children when deciding whether to close schools, kindergartens, and nursery centers
- Give due consideration to improving the treatment of workers labeled “essential workers”
- Promote initiatives to eliminate discriminatory treatment associated with infectious diseases
- Strengthen support for single-parent families
- Promote and enhance remote work, taking into account related challenges, and promote flexible work styles
- Promote human resource development and employment support aimed at shifting to growth fields such as the digital and welfare fields
- Promote the active use of statistical information, including administrative work statistics, to quickly grasp and analyze on-the-ground conditions

The study group consists of regional administrators, members of NPOs, economists, sociologists and other experts who have been conducting empirical social scientific research on problems in the labor market and households, and experts in medical care. It conducted research, study, and analysis, provided the latest information, and conducted cross-disciplinary discussions from both “with COVID-19” and “post COVID-19” perspectives based on hearings from experts such as university professors and think tanks, labor-management organizations, persons in charge of practical affairs at support groups and NGOs, and policy makers at ministries and agencies, etc., aiming to quickly and comprehensively highlight the impact of the spread of COVID-19 on women and the challenges they face.

The culmination of the study group was compiled into the “Report of the Study Group on the Impact on Women and Issues under COVID-19: Toward a Post COVID-19 Society Where No One is Left Behind,” which was submitted to the Minister in charge of Women’s Empowerment and the Minister of State for Gender Equality in April 2021. Based on the discussions of the study group, the report recommends: (1)

the importance of gender statistics and analysis; (2) initiatives for gender equality; (3) women's participation; and (4) a review of systems and practices, toward a post-COVID-19 society.

Freedom from Violence, Stigma and Stereotypes

Critical areas of concern:

- D. Violence against women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- L. The girl child

15. Over the past five years, what forms of gender-based violence, and in which specific contexts or settings, has your country prioritized for action?

The Government of Japan has been developing initiatives to eradicate all forms of violence, including violence by spouses or intimate partners, sexual crimes, and sexual violence, in order to realize a society in which women can live with dignity and pride.

(1) Strengthening of Measures Against Violence by Spouses or Intimate Partners

In response to the current reality of spousal violence, the Diet passed the amended Spousal Violence Prevention Act in May 2023, which includes measures such as the expansion of the protection order system.

Under this Act, with respect to measures against spousal violence and strengthening of such measures, the scope of victims who can file a petition for a stay-away order has been expanded, the period of a stay-away order has been extended, and some acts have been added to the acts subject to an order prohibiting phone calls, etc. The amended Penal Code passed in June 2023, which includes the change of the crime of Forcible Sexual Intercourse to the crime of Sexual Intercourse Without Consent, clarifies that the crime of Sexual Intercourse Without Consent can be committed even between spouses.

(2) Strengthening of Measures Against Sexual Crimes and Sexual Violence

Since April 2020, the Liaison Conference of the Relevant Ministries and Agencies for Enhancement of Measures against Sexual Crimes and Sexual Violence has been held to discuss and promote the strengthening of initiatives for measures against sexual crimes and sexual violence through cooperation among relevant ministries and agencies. Amid growing social momentum toward eliminating sexual crimes and sexual violence from society through the dedicated activities of victims and support groups, the “Policy for Strengthening of Measures against Sexual Crimes and Sexual Violence” was formulated in June of the same year, and initiatives against sexual crimes and sexual violence were strengthened during the period from FY2020 to FY2022 as the “intensive strengthening period.” Specifically, efforts were carried out by examining criminal laws to deal with sexual crimes in a strict and appropriate manner, expanding recidivism prevention programs, developing an environment where it is easier for victims to report harm and seek consultation, promoting “life safety education,” and raising awareness throughout society.

Despite these initiatives, the situation of sexual crimes and sexual violence has remained serious; accordingly, the “Policy for Further Strengthening of Measures against Sexual Crimes and Sexual Violence” (March 2023) was formulated with the aim to further strengthen measures, setting the period from FY2023 to FY2025 as the “further intensive strengthening period” and the following initiatives are identified for enhancement:

1. Response to amendments to criminal laws and the appropriate operation of criminal procedures
 - Response to amendments of criminal laws

- Consideration regarding the operation of criminal procedures
- Prevention of secondary victimization and protection of privacy in criminal proceedings
- 2. Further enhancement of measures to prevent recidivism and prevention of sexual crimes and sexual violence
 - Further enhancement of measures to prevent recidivism, etc.
 - Support for recidivism prevention measures by local governments
 - Strict punishment of teachers and others who commit indecent acts and prevention of recurrence
- 3. Development of an environment where it is easier for victims to report harm and seek consultation
 - Ensuring immediate acceptance of damage reports
 - Development of a system for the collection and retention of evidence
 - Prevention of secondary victimization during the investigation stage
 - Enhancement of the familiarity with and support for consultation services provided by police
 - Strengthening of the system that connects victims to the One-stop Support Centers
 - Strengthening of the system for consultation at schools, etc.
- 4. Establishment of continuous and generous support for victims, with the One-stop Support Centers as the core
 - Further enhancement of medical support and development of professional human resources
 - Enhancement of medium- to long-term support systems
 - Enhancement of diverse support for victims
- 5. Raising social awareness and preventing violence through educational and awareness-raising activities
 - Education and awareness-raising activities according to each developmental stage
 - Raising awareness throughout society
- 6. Responding to new issues, etc.
 - Prevention and relief of damage caused by appearing in AVs (adult films)
 - Response to sexual violence, etc., on the Internet
 - Thorough implementation of the Policy Package for the Eradication of Groping
 - Prevention of slander against victims and supporters, etc.

Alongside these initiatives, revisions of sexual crime provisions of the Penal Code, etc., were also undertaken, and in June 2023, the Penal Code and other laws were revised and the Act on Punishment of Non-Consensual Recording of Sexual Images was newly established to more strictly police sexual crimes and provide greater protection for victims. Specifically, (A) the crimes of Forcible Sexual Intercourse and Indecency through Compulsion were abolished and the crimes of Penetrative Sexual Assault and Indecent Assault were newly established, (B) the so-called age of consent was raised from 13 to 16, (C) demands to meet a person under the age of 16 for indecent purposes was criminalized, (D) so-called voyeurism and providing secretly taken photos to others, etc. were criminalized, and (E) the Statute of Limitations Period for sexual crimes was extended.

The Act on Prevention and Remedy of Harm Associated with Performing in Sexually Explicit Videos was also established in June 2022, setting rules regarding invalidating performance contracts for sexually explicit videos. In June 2024, the Child Sexual Violence Prevention Act was established, which introduced measures such as mandating providers of education and childcare services to take measures to prevent sexual violence against children (e.g., daily safety measures such as interviews, consultations, and training, as well as background checks of certain sexual criminal records).

(3) Policy Package for the Eradication of Groping

In March 2023, the Policy Package for the Eradication of Groping compiled the following basic concepts and measures to be implemented in the future to address measures against groping:

- Fundamental Awareness in Promoting Measures against Groping
 - Groping is a serious crime
 - Damage caused by groping is not minor
 - Victims are not to be blamed at all
 - Do not leave victims alone
 - Groping is not just about other people
- Measures Aimed at Eliminating Groping
 - (a) Initiatives to prevent groping
 - Identification of the practical circumstances of groping
 - Strengthening of focused policing
 - Promotion of the use of crime-prevention apps
 - Introduction of women-only passenger cars, etc.
 - Sharing of effective initiatives to prevent groping among railway business operators
 - Installation of in-train security cameras and establishment of installation standards
 - Ensuring safety on school routes, etc., and safety education
 - Life safety education
 - (b) Initiatives to prevent recidivism of perpetrators
 - Provision of re-offending prevention guidance for sex offenders at penal institutions, etc.
 - Implementation of the re-offending prevention program on sexual recidivism in probation offices
 - Support for initiatives to prevent sexual recidivism by local governments
 - (c) Initiatives to support victims
 - Development of an environment where it is easier for victims to report harm and seek consultation
 - Familiarization with the One-stop Support Centers for Victims of Sexual Crimes and Sexual Violence, and enhancement of consultation services for victims of groping
 - Enhancement of consultation systems in schools
 - Response to accommodate being late or absent due to being a victim of groping
 - Ensuring opportunities for students who have been victimized to take examinations
 - Strengthen the functions of the police, One-Stop Support Centers, schools, etc.
 - (d) Initiatives to promote social awareness
 - Implementation of a campaign against groping in cooperation with railway business operators, etc.
 - Public relations and awareness-raising activities through the Youth Sexual Violence Prevention Month, etc.
 - Promotion of public relations and awareness-raising activities at schools
 - Familiarization of children and students with initiatives regarding responses to groping
 - (e) Cross-cutting initiatives
 - Framework for the steady implementation of the Policy Package
 - Dissemination of information on measures against groping by relevant ministries and agencies in cooperation with one another
 - Implementation of surveys, etc., on victims of groping

(4) Anti-harassment Measures

Detailed in Q6 (2)

(5) Measures against Trafficking in Persons

Trafficking in persons is a severe violation of human rights and requires a prompt and appropriate response from a humanitarian perspective as trafficking in persons causes serious psychological and physical pain for the victims and recovery from such damage is very difficult. In addition, trafficking in persons is a grave crime that often crosses borders, and the strengthening of prevention and countermeasures against trafficking in persons is an urgent and widespread issue that should be addressed by the international community. Based on this recognition, the Government of Japan has been carrying out the following initiatives in a government-wide manner with close coordination among relevant administrative agencies, including the formulation of the 2022 Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the holding of the Council for the Promotion of Measures to Combat Trafficking in Persons, consisting of relevant cabinet ministers, as needed. The Fifth Basic Plan also clearly states the promotion of measures to combat trafficking in persons.

- Thorough understanding of the real-world situation of trafficking in persons
- Prevention of trafficking in persons
 - Promoted the approach to and cooperation with the sending countries of technical intern trainees for their proper training through reporting improper sending organizations based on the memorandum of cooperation and holding meetings between consular authorities.
 - In the Prefectural Labor Bureaus, persons in charge of addressing trafficking in persons have taken the lead in uncovering suspected cases of labor exploitation against technical intern trainees and facilitated joint inspection and investigation with the Organization for Technical Intern Training.
 - Promoted public relations and awareness activities for employers, including managers of adult entertainment businesses and technical intern training implementing organizations.
- Promotion of identification of trafficking victims
 - The National Police Agency prepared and distributed a compact leaflet with easy-to-understand design in ten languages calling for victims to report their situation to the police and the Immigration Services Agency, etc.
 - Promoted the development of an environment that facilitates consultations and reporting, including the expansion of the number of languages to support, through the contact points for consultation and telephone consultation service and calling the police for foreign nationals set up in the Immigration Services Agency, Legal Affairs Bureaus and District Legal Affairs Bureaus, and Prefectural Labor Bureaus.
 - Strengthened measures against recruiting information such as human trafficking contracts by expanding the range of information handled by the Internet Hotline Center, which requests the removal of illegal or harmful information on the Internet.
- Eradication of trafficking in persons
 - Utilizing the revised “Handbook on Measures against Trafficking in Persons,” the police, Immigration Services Agency, prosecutors, Labor Standards Inspection Offices, and Japan Coast Guard have tightened crackdowns on trafficking in persons and related offenses.
 - While the number of children victimized through social media violating the Child Prostitution and Child Pornography Prohibition Act, etc., continues to be at a high level, various measures have been taken based on the “Plan for the Prevention of Sex Crimes against Children 2022” (Basic Plan on Measures against Child Sexual Exploitation) decided in May 2022.

- Protection of and support for trafficking victims
 - The Immigration Services Agency implements measures for foreign victims of trafficking in persons who are under protection, such as changing their status of residence or granting them special permission to stay, while giving full consideration to their perspective.
 - At Women's Consulting Offices, victims are offered temporary protection as well as shelters, food and clothing, interpretation support, and medical support where necessary.
 - Promotion of stabilizing the operation and improving of the quality of the "One-Stop Support Center for Victims of Sex Crimes and Sexual Violence," which provides victims with medical, psychological, and legal assistance in one location as much as possible, in response to their consultation immediately after victimization.
 - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides financial support to the International Organization for Migration (IOM)'s return and reintegration assistance project for foreign victims to their countries of origin.
- Development of the foundation for promoting measures against trafficking in persons
 - In light of recent developments at home and abroad, Japan has been providing assistance through JICA and through contributions to international organizations to carry out trainings and programs to other countries, particularly in Southeast Asia, in order to strengthen their capacity to combat trafficking in persons. Furthermore, Japan has participated in international conferences to discuss and share information with other countries regarding trafficking in persons.
 - Promotion of public relations and awareness activities by preparing and distributing posters and leaflets for users and victims
 - Conducted an exchange of opinions and provision of information with relevant organizations and NGOs

16. In the past five years, what actions has your country prioritized to address gender-based violence?

(1) Laws on Violence Against Women
Detailed in Q15.

(2) National Action Plan on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
Detailed in Q15.

(3) Services for Victims of Sexual Crimes and Sexual Violence

First, the police provide free 24-hour consultation regarding victimization and investigations related to sexual crimes at the "Sexual Crime Victim Consultation Telephone Service." This telephone consultation service has adopted the nationwide unified number "#8103" and connects to prefectural police that have jurisdiction over the area from which the call is made.

Furthermore, prefectures, designated cities, and core cities have established the One-stop Support Centers and support bases in 66 locations throughout Japan (as of April 2024) for the purpose of reducing the mental and physical burden of victims of sexual crimes and sexual violence and restoring their health by providing them with comprehensive support in one place as much as possible starting immediately after victimization, including medical, legal, and psychological support. The One-stop Support Centers have also adopted the nationwide common number "#8891" to provide a free consultation service of the nearest One-stop Support Center. The Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet

Office provides financial support for operation costs, medical expenses, and other expenses of the work covered by public expenses through the Grants for the Support of Victims of Sexual Crimes and Sexual Violence and also supports their operation by providing training programs for related persons. The One-stop Support Centers also accept consultations regarding victims of AVs (adult films).

The police provide counseling by police personnel with specialized knowledge and skills to alleviate the psychological burden of sexual crime victims and help them recover from harm. A system that covers the medical or counseling costs at public expense when crime victims visit a psychiatrist or certificated clinical psychologist of their own choice has also been established. Besides the above, the police have set up dedicated juvenile counseling phone lines and e-mail services at each prefectural police department, where police officers provide consultation services on various matters, including those related to child sexual abuse, such as child prostitution and production of child pornography. In addition to strictly policing groping and voyeurism, the police also develop an environment where it is easier for victims to report harm and seek consultation and implement familiarization and awareness-raising activities related to the prevention of groping.

(4) Prevention of Sexual Crimes and Sexual Violence

Violence by spouses or intimate partners, sexual crimes, sexual violence, stalking, prostitution, trafficking in persons, sexual harassment, and any other forms of violence against women are grave violations of human rights and are important issues that must be overcome in order to create a gender-equal society.

Based on this recognition, the Campaign for Eliminating Violence against Women is held every year for two weeks from November 12th to the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (November 25th), and the national government, local governments, and related organizations collaborate to conduct the following public information and awareness-raising activities to eradicate violence against women:

- Display and distribution of posters and leaflets
- Implementation of purple lighting at various facilities such as the Tokyo Skytree and other landmarks and towers throughout the country
- Holding events and other activities throughout the country

Furthermore, April is designated as Youth Sexual Violence Prevention Month, and awareness-raising activities are effectively conducted through social media and other PR media that make it easier to reach young people. In particular, the awareness that “sexual acts without consent are sexual violence” and “victims are not to be blamed” is being spread throughout society through raising awareness about prevention, familiarizing people with places to seek advice, and raising awareness about the necessity of support for victims from people around them.

In addition, the police have established a children’s and women’s safety task force in each prefectural police headquarters to promote preemptive and preventive activities that identify the perpetrators of sexual crimes at the stage when victims are approached or followed, etc., and arrest them or give them guidance/warnings.

(5) Training for Related Parties

(a) Violence by spouses or intimate partners

In order to provide advice to deepen the understanding of related parties on the actual situation and characteristics of violence by a spouse or intimate partner, ensure appropriate responses, and achieve effective resolution of the issue, the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office holds a training

session that covers initiatives of various ministries and agencies on measures against violence by spouses or intimate partners, the basic stance in supporting victims of violence by spouses or intimate partners, and points to keep in mind, targeting the following related parties. This training session is available online.

- Targeted Participants:
 - Heads of the Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Centers
 - Administrative staff of the departments (bureaus) in charge of the Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Centers in prefectures and municipalities and administrative staff of departments (bureaus) in municipalities that are considering establishing a Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Center
 - Counselors of the Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Centers in prefectures and municipalities and other staff in charge of consultation and support for domestic violence victims in municipalities
 - Counselors of private support groups (including private shelters) that are currently cooperating with the Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Centers
 - Women's counseling and support officers and staff in charge of consultation and support for victims of domestic violence at women's counseling and support centers and women's self-support facilities
 - Staff members of the Child Guidance Centers and other departments involved in responding to child abuse

In addition to training at the time of recruitment and promotion of police officers, the police provide training on how to appropriately respond to cases of spousal violence, etc. by utilizing specialized training sessions at police academies and various other opportunities.

The government understands that the Legal Training and Research Institute—an institute in charge of training judges—holds training sessions that include lectures by psychiatrists on the psychology of and responses to victims of domestic violence at the workshop on protection order cases, and DVDs containing the contents of the training sessions are distributed to courts throughout Japan. It is also understood that, at the Training and Research Institute for Court Officials, practical research on protection order cases related to spousal violence, etc. was conducted at the workshop for court officials in FY2022. In addition, it is understood that, at the said training institute, lectures on the Domestic Violence Act and the current status of domestic violence are held every year for those being trained as court clerks and family court investigating officers and lectures on spousal violence are held for those being trained as family court investigating officers.

(b) Sexual violence and sexual crimes

The Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office prepared and provided online training materials for counselors and other staff at the One-stop Support Centers and conducted online training sessions in order to foster an environment where victims of sexual crimes, etc. can receive necessary consultation and support while feeling safe.

Online training materials were also created and provided to those in the leading positions who have many opportunities to educate and raise awareness among young people and to administrative officials in charge of prevention and awareness-raising projects on sexual violence targeting young people at local governments, so that they can acquire effective methods of prevention and awareness-raising.

17. In the past five years, what strategies has your country used to prevent gender-based violence?

(1) Prevention of Sexual Crimes and Sexual Violence

Detailed in Q16 (4)

(2) Prevention of Sexual Victimization of Children and Young People

Although various measures have been taken against sexual crimes and sexual violence against children and young people based on the “Policy for Further Strengthening of Measures against Sexual Crimes and Sexual Violence,” the Basic Plan on Measures against Child Sexual Exploitation 2022, and others, there are still many cases in which vulnerable children and young people become victims of sexual crimes and sexual violence. There are also some ongoing issues that continue to persist, such as the fact that it is difficult for victims to identify themselves as victims of sexual crimes and to seek and receive appropriate support. In view of these circumstances, in July 2023, a joint meeting of the Liaison Conference of the Relevant Ministries and Agencies for Enhancement of Measures against Sexual Crimes and Sexual Violence and the Inter-Ministerial Meeting on Measures against Child Sexual Exploitation compiled the Package of Emergency Measures to Prevent Sexual Victimization of Children and Youth, which includes the pillars of “strengthening measures for the prevention of perpetration,” “strengthening measures to make it easier to seek consultation and report harm,” and “strengthening measures to provide support for victims.”

Based on the Act on the Prevention of Sexual Violence against Children by Educational Personnel, measures regarding the prevention of sexual violence against children by educational personnel were implemented by means such as:

- Creation of an educational video for educational personnel and students taking teacher training courses at universities to deepen their understanding of the prevention of sexual violence against children;
- Creation and publication of training videos for educational personnel regarding the prevention of sexual violence against children; and
- Creation and publication of a collection of initiatives that compiles the know-how and expertise of boards of education, etc. that are making advanced efforts to prevent sexual violence against children by educational personnel.

The Act sets forth measures to be taken at the time of appointment or employment of educational personnel, making it mandatory for the person in charge of hiring educational personnel to check the database of those whose teacher’s license has been revoked or confiscated due to their involvement in sexual violence against children before appointing or employing the personnel. Further, a provision of the right to discretionary refusal when reissuing a license to specified persons with revoked licenses, etc. was set forth, and it was determined that it is basically appropriate not to reissue a license if there is even a slight probability that the person will again engage in sexual violence, etc. against children.

The “Comprehensive Measures to Prevent Sexual Violence against Children” were compiled in April 2024, and the relevant ministries and agencies are to work in cooperation with one another to implement comprehensive measures from the following four viewpoints: (A) prevention of offense; (B) making it easier to seek consultation and report harm; (C) support for victims; and (D) medical treatment and rehabilitation. Furthermore, the Child Sexual Violence Prevention Act was established in June 2024, which introduced measures such as mandating providers of education and childcare services to take measures to prevent sexual violence against children (e.g., daily safety measures such as interviews, consultations, and training, as well as background checks of certain sexual criminal records).

18. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (e.g. online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)?

(1) Relevant Laws and Regulations

Amid increasing cases of voyeurism related to underwear, etc. through using smartphones and other devices and growing concerns about the seriousness of damage caused thereby, the Act on Punishment of Non-Consensual Recording of Sexual Images was established in June 2023. This Act punishes the act of secretly filming sexual body parts of or underwear worn by an individual without reasonable grounds and defines acts such as filming while the subject is “in a state in which it is difficult to form, express, or fulfill their intention not to consent” to being filmed as the crime of “Non-Consensual Recording of a Sexual Image.” The act of filming sexual body parts of or underwear worn by an individual under the age of 16 without reasonable grounds is also punishable as the crime of “Non-Consensual Recording of a Sexual Image,” regardless of whether or not the individual has consented thereto.

In addition, acts such as providing images taken by these acts to others or publicly uploading them on the Internet are punishable as the crime of “Distribution of a Non-Consensual Record of a Sexual Image,” and the act of storing such images for the purpose of providing them to others is punishable as the crime of “Storage of a Non-Consensual Record of a Sexual Image.”

Traditionally, some of the so-called acts of voyeurism were subject to punishment pursuant to the so-called nuisance prevention ordinances of each prefecture, the crime of Secretly Producing Child Pornography under the Child Prostitution and Child Pornography Regulation Act, among others. However, punishable acts prescribed in the nuisance prevention ordinances differ from prefecture to prefecture and the crime of Producing Child Pornography only protects children, so there had been some cases where these ordinances and laws alone could not necessarily address the issue. Therefore, the Act on Punishment of Non-Consensual Recording of Sexual Images criminalizes, in addition to such cases, the act of filming a sexual image of an individual against the individual’s will or providing a record created thereby, in order to protect the right and interest not to have the individual’s sexual acts viewed by others on other occasions against their will.

(2) Cooperation with Relevant Organizations and Groups

Measures against sexual violence on the Internet (strict measures against illegal acts, prevention of distribution and viewing of child pornography images, etc.) have been implemented during the “further intensive strengthening period” for measures against sexual crimes and sexual violence (FY2023 to FY2025), with a focus on the following specific measures:

(a) Prevention of Distribution

Efforts have been made to identify illegal information, etc. such as child pornography through cyber patrols, the Internet Hotline Center, and anonymous reporting programs, and requests to delete such illegal information, etc. are made by the police or the Internet Hotline Center to the website administrators, etc.

(b) Awareness-raising Activities

From the viewpoint of preventing individuals from becoming a victim or a perpetrator, public relations and awareness-raising activities for the safe and secure use of the Internet were conducted in cooperation with relevant organizations and groups, and initiatives to improve ICT literacy and media literacy were

also promoted. Particularly, in order to prevent young people and children from being tricked or threatened to take pictures of their naked bodies, etc. and send them via e-mail or similar, measures such as education and awareness-raising for young people, children, and their guardians are being comprehensively promoted. Specific measures are as follows:

- Through the Youth Sexual Violence Prevention Month in April every year, public relations and awareness-raising activities were promoted for young people, children, and students regarding sexual harm through social media, utilizing social media and other public relations media that make it easier to reach young people.
- In July 2023, the “National Month for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency and Juvenile Victimization” was promoted with the top priority of “prevention of criminal victimization of children in the use of the Internet” and various activities for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and victimization were intensively implemented nationwide with the participation of relevant ministries and agencies and the cooperation and support of local governments and related organizations.
- For the purpose of spreading awareness of the safe use of the Internet by children, the “e-Net Caravan”—a series of lectures at schools and other places for students, parents, teachers, and staff—was held nationwide in cooperation with companies and organizations in the information and telecommunications field, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

(c) Consultation

The Illegal Harmful Hotline—a center that is available for consultations from general users, etc. and provides advice on how to respond to cases and related information—has been established to promote appropriate responses to illegal and harmful information on the Internet.

19. In the past five years, what measures has your country taken to resource women’s organizations working to prevent and respond to GBV?

(1) Projects Based on the Act on Support for Women Facing Difficult Problems

Based on the Act on Support for Women Facing Difficult Problems, efforts have been made to develop a system that offers a variety of support services in a comprehensive manner, including discovery, consultation, assistance for recovery of mental and physical health, assistance for independent living, and similar for the purpose of respecting the human rights of women facing difficult problems and contributing to the realization of a society in which they can live safely and independently, and so that they can receive support best suited to their problems, backgrounds, and mental and physical conditions.

Subsidies include:

- Expenses required for the assignment of women's counseling and support officers who are non-regular employees
- Expenses required for the establishment and operation of support coordination meetings
- Expenses required to provide support in cooperation with private organizations
- Operating expenses of temporary shelters of women's counseling and support centers
- Operating expenses of women's self-support facilities
- Transportation expenses and expenses for hiring interpreters for victims of trafficking in persons at women's counseling and support centers

(2) Pilot Project for Strengthening the Safety Net for Victims of Domestic Violence

The pilot project for strengthening the safety net for victims of domestic violence has been expanded, and grants are promoting advanced initiatives for private shelters and others that support victims of domestic violence, such as (A) development of acceptance systems, (B) specialized and individualized support, and (C) seamless and comprehensive support.

(3) Exchange Programs with Women in the Asia-Pacific Region and Africa

The Asia-Pacific and African Women's Exchange Program Toward the Eradication of Gender-Based Violence was initiated in FY2020 for the purpose of promoting exchanges and sharing of knowledge and experiences among people involved in countermeasures against gender-based violence in Japan and other Asian-Pacific regions and the African regions and contributing to the development of human resources and strengthening of response capability in each country. In the first year, a research survey was conducted on the situation of gender-based violence in the Asia-Pacific and African regions and an online information-sharing/opinion exchange session was held with program participants selected with the cooperation of each country's national government and diplomatic missions.

In FY2021, taking into account the achievements of the activities in FY2020, an online exchange event among participants and an open seminar for Japanese practitioners were held to deepen exchanges among participants and provide an opportunity to share knowledge and learning more broadly. These achievements have led to cooperation toward the eradication of violence across countries and regions.

20. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media?

(1) Awareness-Raising on Unconscious Bias

Gender equality is important for men as well, and is something that should be promoted by both men and women together. In particular, it is important to expand the perspective of gender equality and women's empowerment not only to companies and organizations, but also to families, communities, and the entire sphere of daily life. In doing so, it is necessary to raise awareness among people from childhood to adulthood, in cooperation with the media, so that unconscious bias does not work disadvantageously toward either men or women. Surveys conducted by the Cabinet Office in FY2021 and FY2022 show, for example, that many respondents have unconscious bias based on gender in items such as "men should work to support the household" and "women should not be in charge of important tasks during child-rearing periods."

In order to eliminate such stereotyped perceptions of gender roles and unconscious bias, the Cabinet Office has been working on the preparation and promotion of the use of:

- Check sheets and a collection of case studies based on the results of the survey;
- Free illustrations that are not depictive of stereotypical gender roles; and
- A promotional video based on the contents of the check sheets and case studies.

Based on the results of the survey, check sheets, case studies, and others, workshops have been held several times a year for local governments and companies, including the media.

*Workshops held

FY2022: Five times (twice for local governments, twice for companies, and once for the media)

FY2023: Five times (twice for local governments, and three times for companies (including the media))

(2) Cooperation with the Media

Voluntary initiatives in each industry regarding gender equality are promoted, especially for the media, including measures against information that may infringe on the human rights of women in real life, such as expressions of sexual violence, while fully respecting the freedom of expression. Specifically, the following measures have been implemented:

- Collaboration with the Unstereotype Alliance, an international joint initiative promoted by UN Women to eliminate stereotypes that hinder gender equality, and the exchange of opinions at various meetings, including with private organizations participating in the said initiative
- Dissemination of good examples of initiatives related to the expansion of women's participation in decision-making processes in media and other fields
- Exchange of opinions with those involved in the media industry on the importance of implementing initiatives to eliminate gendered divisions of roles based on unconscious bias

21. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken specifically tailored to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls?

(1) Support for Women Facing Difficult Problems

Through the government's support programs for women, from the perspectives of "women's welfare," "respect for and protection of human rights," and "gender equality" based on the Act on Support for Women Facing Difficult Problems enacted in April 2024, efforts are being made to provide consultations to women facing difficult problems in leading their daily or social lives due to sexual victimization, family situation, relationship with the local community, and various other reasons while being considerate of their situations, and to provide continuous and comprehensive support according to each individual's needs in cooperation and collaboration with various agencies. Specifically, upon receiving consultation from a woman facing difficult problems through women's counseling and support officers, the police, and a variety of other routes, a staff member of a women's counseling and support center interviews and conducts an assessment and then considers and decides on a support policy, such as temporary protection, outsourcing temporary protection, or connection to other relevant organizations. Support for those who have difficulty living on their own after temporary protection ends is also provided, including placement in a women's self-support facility, private shelter, or Maternal and Child Living Support Facility, respecting their wishes.

(2) Formulation of the Guide to Eligibility Determination for Refugee Status

The Guide to Eligibility Determination for Refugee Status was formulated in March 2023. The guide is intended not only to be used for the refugee status recognition work of the Immigration Services Agency of the Ministry of Justice, but also to provide a broader understanding of Japan's refugee status recognition system. The guide also refers to matters related to situations such as persecution of sexual minorities and gender-based persecution, which may not have been anticipated at the time when the Refugee Convention was concluded (known as "new forms of persecution").

The guide clearly states that those who belong to a group, in their country of nationality, etc., in which they are at risk of being subjected to infringement on or suppression of life, body, or liberty and other grave violations of human rights (e.g., FGM and other infringements and violence against the body) because of their gender based on traditional and cultural norms or practices may fall under the

category of those who have a well-founded fear of being persecuted for being a member of a particular social group.

(3) Spousal Violence Consultation Program for Foreign Women

In light of concerns about the increase and seriousness of spousal violence exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, “DV Hotline+”—a new domestic violence consultation service—was established in April 2020. DV Hotline+ offers consultations service via social media in 10 languages (English, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Portuguese, Tagalog, Thai, Vietnamese, Indonesian, and Nepalese).

Participation, Accountability, and Gender-responsive Institutions

Critical areas of concern:

- G. Women in power and decision-making
- H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- L. The girl child

22. In the past five years, what actions and measures has your country taken to promote women’s participation in public life and decision-making?

Based on the recognition that the promotion of gender equality in the political field is critical for reflecting diverse public opinions in politics, the Government of Japan has been taking various measures in accordance with the Fifth Basic Plan, which clearly states that the government is to conduct research and gather information on actual situations, conduct public awareness activities, improve the environment, and develop human resources as set forth in the Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field, strengthen cooperation with political parties, the Diet, local governments, six local government major organizations, and other entities related to women’s participation in politics, and thereby actively promote gender equality in the political field. For example, the “Women in Politics Map” is made available to the public every year on the website of the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office to visualize the percentages of women in the Diet, women among the heads of local governments, and women in municipal assemblies, in an effort to foster momentum for promoting gender equality in the political field.

Although women’s participation in the political field is gradually increasing, it is still far behind other countries, and it is necessary to develop an environment where it is easier for both men and women to engage in activities such as running for office and serving as a Diet or local assembly member. Accordingly, the Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field was amended in June 2021 in order to promote political parties, etc. to implement more active efforts, and to strengthen the measures taken by the national and local governments.

This amendment resulted in the following: (A) relevant organizations were clearly specified to actively work on the promotion of gender equality in the political field under the appropriate division of roles; (B) provisions stating that political parties and other political organizations are to make voluntary efforts to set a goal for the number of male and female candidates, improve candidate selection methods, foster suitable persons to become candidates, and take measures against sexual harassment, and

harassment related to pregnancy or childbirth, etc. were set forth, with the aim of promoting efforts by political parties and other political organizations; and (C) provisions stating that the national and local governments are mandated to formulate and implement necessary measures for the promotion of gender equality in the political field, and to take measures such as the development of a system to support the balancing of the activities of a Diet or local assembly member and family life and the implementation of training programs that contribute to the prevention of sexual harassment and harassment related to pregnancy or childbirth, etc., were set forth, with the aim of strengthening measures taken by the national and local governments.

In line with the Act, the Government of Japan has been steadily promoting the following:

- The request to each political party to make voluntary efforts to set numerical targets pertaining to women candidates;
- The promotion of the development and utilization of training materials for the prevention of harassment in the political field; and
- “Visualization” of the number of women Diet or local assembly members and public relations regarding good practices in local assemblies where the ratio of women members has increased.

23. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase women’s access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICTs)?

The Government of Japan believes that it is necessary to promote the appointment of women to higher positions in the media field, etc., where they have significant influence in generating public awareness, in light of the low percentage of women in decision-making processes in the field. In order to ensure that information from the media, etc. does not implant or impose stereotyped perceptions of gender roles among children and other various age groups, it is important that there is no gender disproportion among those in executive and managerial positions in the media field. For this reason, the Fifth Basic Plan clearly states the promotion of expanding women’s participation in decision-making processes in the media field, etc., and, considering that a sexual harassment case occurred between the media and the government, the government as a whole is committed to preventing, remedying, and preventing recurrence of damage.

Specifically, the government has supported the initiatives of more than 1,200 companies to promote women’s empowerment by providing consultation and briefing sessions, consulting services, and other services to general employers who are required to establish a General Employer Action Plan based on the Act on the Promotion of Women’s Active Engagement in Professional Life. With regard to the appointment of women to higher positions, voluntary initiatives at the executive level are important; therefore, the government has requested through industry associations the setting of specific targets and work toward them.

Furthermore, in order to prevent, remedy, and prevent the recurrence of sexual harassment, the government is making efforts to foster mutual understanding regarding the environment for news gathering in the government. The government is also making efforts to inform employers’ organizations, etc. in the media field of the government’s initiatives regarding sexual harassment prevention and news gathering, and is requesting them to promote women’s empowerment in news-gathering sites and expand women’s participation in the policy decision-making process.

24. Please describe your country’s current national women’s machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of

women) and describe the measures that your country taken over the past five years to establish and/or strengthen it.

The national machinery for gender equality and women's empowerment in Japan is: the Gender Equality Bureau established in the Cabinet Office and headed by the Prime Minister; the Council for Gender Equality which is an important policy council of the Cabinet Office; the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality established in the Cabinet based on Cabinet approval; and the Headquarters for Creating a Society in which All Women Shine established in the Cabinet based on Cabinet approval.

(1) Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office

The Cabinet Office is an organization in charge of planning, formulation, and general coordination of specific matters that are important for national policy, and the Act for Establishment of the Cabinet Office sets forth the following two matters related to gender equality as its administrative affairs:

- Affairs related to the planning, formulation, and general coordination necessary for the unification of the measures of various administrative departments with respect to matters concerning basic policies for the promotion of the formation of a gender-equal society
- Among affairs related to the preparation and promotion of the Basic Plan for Gender Equality and the promotion of the formation of a gender-equal society, affairs related to the planning, formulation, and implementation of affairs that do not fall under the jurisdiction of other ministries

The Act for Establishment of the Cabinet Office sets forth that the Prime Minister may establish a Minister of State for Special Missions to assist the Prime Minister when the Prime Minister deems it particularly necessary to unify the policies of the various administrative departments with respect to important Cabinet policies, and that the Minister of State for Special Missions may make recommendations to the heads of all relevant administrative organs and submit opinions to the Prime Minister when deemed necessary. Based on this provision, the Minister of State for Special Missions in charge of gender equality has been established in the Cabinet Office. In addition, in 2014, the Minister in charge of Women's Empowerment was newly established in the Cabinet in order to create a society in which all women have confidence and pride in their way of life and are able to take an active role.

The budget of the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office, which comprehensively and systematically promotes government-wide initiatives in line with the Basic Plan for Gender Equality, increased approximately 1.5 times between 2020 and 2024 (FY2020 budget: 976,810,000 yen → FY2024 budget: 1,436,589,000 yen).

(2) Council for Gender Equality

The Act for Establishment of the Cabinet Office and the Basic Act for Gender Equal Society set forth that a Council for Gender Equality be established in the Cabinet Office as an important policy council to contribute to the planning, formulation, and general coordination necessary for the unification of the measures of various administrative departments with regard to important policies of the Cabinet. There are only five important policy councils in total besides the Council for Gender Equality, including councils on economic and fiscal management and on scientific and technological innovation.

The Council for Gender Equality is chaired by the Chief Cabinet Secretary and consists of a total of 25 members, including 12 cabinet ministers and 12 academic experts. The Basic Act sets forth that neither men nor women may fall below 40% of the total number of the expert members.

The authority and function of the Council for Gender Equality is set forth in the Basic Act as follows:

- State opinions regarding the Basic Plan for Gender Equality to the Prime Minister;
- Study and deliberate on basic principles, basic policies, and important matters with regard to promotion of the formation of a gender-equal society in response to consultations with the Prime Minister or relevant ministers;
- Even in the absence of aforementioned consultations related to basic principles, basic policies, and important matters with regard to promotion of the formation of a gender-equal society, conduct study and deliberations on their own and state opinions to the Prime Minister and relevant ministers when they deem it necessary;
- Monitor the status of implementation of government measures to promote the formation of a gender-equal society and study the impact of government measures on the formation of a gender-equal society, and, if deemed necessary, state opinions to the Prime Minister and relevant ministers; and
- When it deems necessary for pursuing affairs under its jurisdiction, the Council may request the heads of relevant administrative organs to submit necessary materials for monitoring or investigation and any other materials, state an opinion, provide an explanation, or provide any other necessary cooperation.

(3) Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality

The Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality has been established in the Cabinet for the smooth and effective promotion of measures to promote the formation of a gender-equal society. The members are as follows:

Chair: Prime Minister

Deputy Chairs: Chief Cabinet Secretary, Minister of State for Gender Equality

Members: All other Ministers

(4) Headquarters for Creating a Society in which All Women Shine

The Headquarters for Creating a Society in which All Women Shine has been established in the Cabinet so that women in various circumstances can realize their own aspirations and shine, and thereby the “power of women”—Japan’s greatest potential—will be fully demonstrated, leading to the revitalization of Japanese society. The members are as follows:

Chair: Prime Minister

Deputy Chairs: Chief Cabinet Secretary, Minister in charge of Women's Empowerment

Members: All other Ministers

The Government of Japan has been implementing initiatives to determine an Intensive Policy to Accelerate the Empowerment of Women by around June of each year from 2015 to 2020 and to reflect it in the government’s budget formulation. The Policy has been decided by the Headquarters for Creating a Society in which All Women Shine based on the opinions stated to the Prime Minister and relevant cabinet ministers by the Council for Gender Equality pursuant to the Basic Act. Since 2021, it has been named the Basic Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and determined by the Headquarters for Creating a Society in which All Women Shine and the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality based on the opinions of the Council for Gender Equality. From 2022, the

name “The Basic Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women” has been written alongside the name of the policy.

25. In the past five years, what other mechanisms and tools has your country used to mainstream gender equality across sectors? (e.g. gender focal points in the Executive, Legislature or Judiciary; inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms; gender audits, consultations with women’s organizations)?

(1) Mechanisms for Gender Equality Mainstreaming

The Liaison Conference for the Promotion of Gender Equality holds meetings to promote national initiatives aimed at creating a gender-equal society, by exchanging information and opinions regarding the creation of a gender-equal society with a wide range of sectors and all levels of society and by promoting other necessary cooperation, while cooperating with the Council for Gender Equality. Members of the Liaison Conference for the Promotion of Gender Equality consist of 120 members, including experts, industry associations, private companies, NPOs, and women’s organizations (as of October 2023), and hold the “Hearing”—a session to exchange opinions and engage in dialogue widely with civil society—on occasion to listen to the voices of the public at large.

(2) G7 Ministerial Meeting on Gender Equality

The G7 Ministerial Meeting on Gender Equality is one of the ministerial meetings held in conjunction with the G7 Summit, and was first held at the 2017 G7 Summit in Taormina, Italy. Ministers in charge of gender equality from the G7 (Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Canada, Germany, and France) and the EU gathered to exchange views and form a consensus on various issues related to gender equality and women’s empowerment that the international community was facing. In addition, representatives from the Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC) and, to represent civil society, the Women 7 (W7) were invited to attend the ministerial meeting. After the meeting, all ministers participated in an event organized by civil society. Collaboration with stakeholders was realized, including experts and civil society.

(3) Examples of Collaboration with NGOs

The FY2022 NGO Study Group “Issues and Practice Toward Gender Mainstreaming in International Cooperation” (a commissioned project of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) published the “Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines” for international cooperation of NGOs in Japan.

26. If there is a national human rights institution in your country, what measures has it taken to address violations of women’s rights and promote gender equality?

Although no national human rights institution has been established, officials of 50 Legal Affairs Bureaus/District Legal Affairs Bureaus and their branches (311 locations in total) and approximately 14,000 Human Rights Volunteers nationwide provide human rights counseling services; when a suspected case of human rights violation is raised, they promptly initiate remedy procedures and take appropriate measures according to the case.

Peaceful and Inclusive Societies

Critical areas of concern:

- E. Women and armed conflict
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

27. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?

(1) Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence in Conflict

In May 2022, Japan attended the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) Champions' Network Virtual Roundtable hosted by the United Kingdom in video conference format. Japan has been supporting the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC) for the purpose of strengthening the rule of law among nations and justice system for prosecution of perpetrators, and has also provided support for medical care and economic independence to survivors of sexual violence in conflict through UN Women, UNFPA, IPPF, the Global Survivors Fund (GSF), and other organizations.

Specifically, Japan contributed a total of 10.12 billion yen (8 million euros) to the GSF from FY2020 to FY2023, the funds of which are used to maintain the Secretariat's functions and strengthen its operations, and to implement various projects to help survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. Japan has also been participating in discussions on the management and operational policies of the Fund as a member of the Board.

Furthermore, in support of UN activities, Japan has contributed a total of about 98 million US dollars over the five-year period from 2020 to 2024 to UN Women, including support for women and girls affected by gender-based violence and projects related to the WPS Agenda. In addition, 3.53 million US dollars were contributed to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC) for FY2020 and thereafter.

Japan and Sierra Leone proposed the resolution entitled "International Cooperation for Access to Justice, Remedies and Assistance for Survivors of Sexual Violence" to the United Nations General Assembly, which was adopted by consensus by the 76th UN General Assembly (September 2022). This resolution is revolutionary as the first resolution specifically addressing sexual violence, and encompasses international cooperation on access to justice, remedies, and assistance for survivors of sexual violence in conflict, in humanitarian crises such as natural disasters, and in peacetime.

(2) Commitment by the G7

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May 2023, under Japan's leadership, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, including its application to disaster risk reduction (DRR), was discussed, and the following three points were affirmed in the Leaders' Communiqué:

- We commit to advancing, implementing and strengthening the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda including its application to disaster risk reduction (DRR), through partnership with the WPS Focal Points Network and support for National Action Plan development, and to promote intersectional approaches.

- We highlight the leading role of women in preventing violent conflict, delivering relief and recovery efforts, and forging lasting peace, and pledge to champion the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace and political processes.
- We commit to strengthening our efforts to eliminate conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, and the importance of providing comprehensive support and meaningful participation for victims and survivors, using a survivor-centered approach.

In December 2023, the “Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Panel Discussion: How Japan can contribute to promoting women's participation in international peace and security” was also held as a follow-up event of the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC) and the World Assembly for Women (WAW!). On the day of the event, the government, civil society, and experts gathered to discuss the way of Japan’s contribution and the direction of WPS initiatives around the world, with a view to promoting women’s participation and women’s leadership in all peacebuilding and disaster response initiatives.

(3) Implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Strengthening of its Implementation System

The National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security Third Edition (a.k.a., the Third Action Plan) was formulated in April 2023.

In particular, based on the accumulated experiences acquired through the implementation of the first and second Action Plans, it was established in the Third Action Plan to: (a) implement initiatives that contribute to the protection of human rights of women and girls, prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence, and women’s empowerment in conflict-affected countries and fragile states due to conflicts or disasters; (b) increase women’s participation in initiatives and decision-making bodies for conflict prevention, resolution, peace negotiations, peacekeeping, and peace support activities, peacebuilding, disaster risk reduction, disaster mitigation, and disaster recovery; and (c) implement initiatives aiming at the development of gender-equal policy and the promotion of women’s empowerment in reconstruction and development initiatives for countries affected by conflict or disaster. In these initiatives, it was decided to broadly target conflict-affected and vulnerable countries, rather than to specify priority countries or priority items.

Furthermore, in January 2024, the Taskforce on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) was established in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for intra-ministry collaboration under the Foreign Minister, and in April 2024, the Ministry of Defense formulated the “Ministry of Defense Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Promotion Plan” to strengthen the implementation system such as education and training on WPS for all Self-Defense Force personnel and the assignment of gender advisors, and the Fire and Disaster Management Agency newly created an official position to facilitate the WPS initiatives in the agency through a comprehensive and cross-functional approach.

28. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings?

- (1) Implementation of the Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Strengthening of its Implementation System
Detailed in Q27 (3).

(2) Promotion of Women's Equal Participation at the Decision-Making Level

Under the Third Action Plan, the following international and domestic initiatives are to be promoted, and the government is to address the promotion of women's participation as well.

- Promotion of gender mainstreaming and the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in all initiatives in conflict prevention/resolution, peace negotiations, peace mediation, peacekeeping activities, and peacebuilding, taking gender analysis into account. Especially, in collaboration with local women's organizations and women leaders.
- Initiatives related to promoting women's participation in UN peacekeeping operations (UN PKO) and other peace support operations, providing gender-related training and fostering women leaders, preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, and preventing sexual violence in conflict.
- As a member of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), active participation in international discussions on women's participation in peacebuilding, and contributions through the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), which places support for women's participation as one of its priorities.
- Gender mainstreaming and assistance based on gender perspective in emergency humanitarian assistance and by Japan Disaster Relief Teams.
- Promotion of women's participation, gender mainstreaming, and initiatives based on a gender perspective in measures against violent extremism and terrorism, as well as support that involves women's participation and empowerment in both decision-making and on-site operations for disaster prevention and disaster response assistance to countries that are vulnerable to or affected by disasters.
- Initiatives to Promote Women's Participation and Empowerment in Disaster Risk Reduction and Response

The "Ministry of Defense Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Promotion Plan" states that the following initiatives are to be implemented in relation to the promotion of women's equal participation at the decision-making level.

- Strengthening of the human resources base, including the expansion of recruitment and promotion of women personnel

In order to enable women's leadership and active participation in all stages of conflict prevention, reconstruction, and peacebuilding as well as disaster prevention, disaster response, and reconstruction, work on reforms for the promotion of active engagement of women personnel, including the expansion of recruitment and promotion of women Self-Defense Force personnel, work style reform for the promotion of work-life balance, and the creation of an environment that does not tolerate harassment of any kind.

The Fire and Disaster Management Agency has carried out various approaches including the following implementations in order for women firefighters to be more involved in disaster response:

- Facilitating local fire departments to enhance awareness around women firefighters' participation in their service, through management lectures and expert advice
- Sharing good practices regarding women firefighters' participation with stakeholders
- Employing equipment that women firefighters can operate in an easy-to-handle manner

(3) Initiatives for International Peace Cooperation Activities

For nearly 80 years since the end of World War II, Japan has been firmly committed to its wish that "we desire to occupy an honored place in an international society striving for the preservation of peace, and the banishment of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance for all time from the earth," and has

been providing various support in the fields of conflict prevention, peacebuilding including cooperation in UN peacekeeping operations (UN PKO), and women's empowerment, etc.

In particular, the following initiatives have been implemented by the Ministry of Defense and the Self-Defense Forces:

- Co-chaired with Vietnam the 4th cycle (2021-2024) of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus Experts' Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations (EWG on PKO). Increasing awareness of and promoting WPS in the field of PKO was set as one of the main objectives of the EWG. Accordingly, the WPS Platform was established and a series of WPS seminars to share knowledge on the importance of women's participation in PKO and women's protection were held.
- Participation in training and education related to gender in multilateral training pertaining to PKO and dispatch of instructors to training and courses conducted by PKO training centers in other countries
- Participation in the UN Female Military Officers Course (UNFMOC) (November to December 2022)
- Dispatch of women personnel as a Staff Officer to UN PKO (UNMISS) Headquarters

29. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response?

(1) Measures against Trafficking in Persons

Detailed in Q16 (5)

(2) Sexual Violence in Conflict

Detailed in Q27 (1)

30. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls?

(1) Establishment of the Basic Act on Children's Policy and Inauguration of the Children and Families Agency

In June 2022, the Basic Act on Children's Policy was established. The purpose of the Basic Act on Children's Policy is, based on the spirit of the Constitution of Japan and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to comprehensively promote measures for children with the aim of realizing a society where all children can live happy lives into the future, and the Act sets forth the basic principles of measures for children, the formulation of the General Principles for Child-Related Measures, and the reflection of the opinions of children.

The Children and Families Agency was also inaugurated at the same time, having the duty to promote welfare and improve the health of children and families with children, provide other support for healthy growth of children and child rearing of families with children, and conduct administrative affairs related to the protection of the rights and interests of children, as well as the duty to assist in administrative affairs of the Cabinet with respect to certain important policies of the Cabinet related to such duties.

Furthermore, in December 2023, the Cabinet approved the General Principles for Child-Related Measures, which set forth the basic policies, etc. for the government-wide measures for children, based on the Basic Act on Children's Policy. In May 2024, the Action Plan for Achieving a Children-Centered Society 2024—an action plan which unifies specific initiatives for a wide range of child-related policies based on the General Principles for Child-Related Measures—was approved by the Council for the Promotion of Child-Related Measures. Under the leadership of the Children and Families Agency, the entire government will promote measures for children.

(2) Prevention of Sexual Victimization of Children and Young People
Detailed in Q16 and Q17

(3) School Education

The Basic Act on Education clearly states that one of the objectives of education is to “foster the value of respect for equality between men and women.” To achieve this goal, the government has conventionally incorporated a gender equality perspective into each stage of training, recruitment, and development of teachers, promoted understanding of gender equality among principals, other teachers, staff, and boards of education, and further enhanced education and learning that promotes the principle of gender equality in school education and social education.

In particular, in primary and secondary education, efforts have been made to familiarize the purpose of the National Curriculum Standards to improve guidance on the importance of gender equality, and to encourage schools, prefectures, and gender equality centers to utilize the supplementary teaching material “Let’s Aim for SDGs x Gender Equality!,” which was created in October 2021 by the Liaison Conference for the Promotion of Gender Equality.

Furthermore, to ensure that teachers and staff—who are the ones closest to children—do not have stereotyped perceptions of gender roles and unconscious bias, initiatives such as training and awareness-raising to promote gender equality have been promoted.

Environmental Conservation, Protection and Rehabilitation

Critical areas of concern:

- I. Human rights of women
- K. Women and the environment
- L. The girl child

31. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation?

The Fifth Basic Plan states the “promotion of initiatives on climate change and other environmental issues from the perspective of gender equality,” and includes a specific direction of: aiming to expand women’s participation in the policy decision-making process in order to realize a sustainable society, taking into consideration international trends in dealing with climate change issues and other environmental issues; and proactively working to ensure that specific initiatives reflect a gender equality perspective.

(1) Expansion of Women's Participation in the Environmental Field

As a way of promoting initiatives on environmental issues such as climate change from the perspective of gender equality, the Central Environment Council of the Ministry of the Environment has been working to increase women's participation in policy decision-making processes by having about half of the members of its Global Environment Committee—a committee established in the Council and in charge of climate change and other issues—be women.

In planning, formulating and implementing measures related to environmental issues, efforts are being made to understand data by gender and to take into consideration the differences in the impact on women and men. In FY2023, information on the gender and other attributes of the target population was collected when conducting a demonstration experiment to promote awareness raising and behavioral change that contributes to greenhouse gas emission reduction, countermeasures against heat stroke, disaster prevention, and conservation of biological diversity, by utilizing the knowledge of nudge theory and other behavioral sciences.

Further, "Education for Sustainable Development" was promoted, which consists of education practices aimed at proactively solving environmental issues and other global issues as one's own issues from the perspectives of gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Climate Change Adaptation Plan approved by the Cabinet in October 2021 states in its basic strategies that "the government should, in implementing its policies, (...) develop decision-making and consensus-building processes that consider gender equality and vulnerable groups and regions so that every actor and every stakeholder in every sector can work together and act responsibly." In terms of support for developing countries in the specific measures, it was included to provide cooperation while being mindful of the Paris Agreement rulebook under the Framework Convention on Climate Change (e.g., regarding gender consideration and participation of local residents), as well as guidelines and guidance relating to the formulation of National Adaptation Plans.

(2) Expansion of Women's Participation in STEM Fields (Reiteration of 8)

Detailed in Q15 (2)

32. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programs for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience?

(1) Basic Disaster Management Plan

Japan's land is located in a natural environment prone to an extremely wide variety of natural disasters, including earthquakes, tsunamis, windstorms, tornadoes, torrential rains, landslides, floods, cliff collapses, mudslides, storm surges, volcanic eruptions, and heavy snowfalls. It is believed that the magnitude of damage caused by disasters is determined by natural phenomena such as earthquakes, tsunamis, windstorms, and floods (natural factors) and the way society perceives these phenomena (social factors). Since the impact of disasters differs depending on various social positions, such as gender, age, and disability, it is important to implement initiatives to minimize the difficulties caused by social factors in the event of a disaster.

Based on this recognition, the Basic Disaster Management Plan (formulated by the National Disaster Management Council in June 2024), which is Japan's comprehensive and long-term plan for disaster prevention, reflects a gender perspective, as follows:

- In order to improve regional disaster prevention preparedness by implementing disaster prevention measures that reflect the diverse perspectives of people living in the region, the government is to expand the participation of women, older persons, and persons with disabilities in the policy decision-making process for disaster prevention policies and principles and the disaster prevention scenes, such as by appointing women as members of Local Disaster Management Councils, and establish a disaster prevention system that incorporates gender equality and other diverse perspectives.
- In order to strengthen disaster response capability from women's perspective, the national government is to inform the departments and bureaus in charge of disaster prevention and the departments and bureaus in charge of gender equality in prefectures so that a cooperative system between the departments and bureaus in charge of disaster prevention, the departments and bureaus in charge of gender equality, and the gender equality centers will be established in local governments and the participation of women officials and officials in charge of gender equality in disaster management headquarters of local governments will be promoted.
- The local governments are to work to increase the percentage of women members of their local disaster management councils from the perspective of gender equality; the departments and bureaus in charge of gender equality are to liaise and coordinate disaster response within its government buildings and shelters, etc.; and the departments and bureaus in charge of disaster prevention and the departments and bureaus in charge of gender equality are to work together to clarify the roles of the departments and bureaus in charge of gender equality and the gender equality centers during normal times and in the event of a disaster, in order for gender equality centers to serve as promotion bases for disaster prevention activities in the community.
- In order to strengthen disaster response capability from women's perspective, the national government is to dispatch officials to the site as necessary based on the conditions of the disaster, and provide necessary support and advice so that departments and bureaus in charge of gender equality will be incorporated in the disaster management headquarters of local governments.
- In the recovery and reconstruction of areas affected by the disaster, women's participation in various scenes and organizations of the recovery and reconstruction is to be promoted from the viewpoint of gender equality. At the same time, the participation of persons with disabilities, older persons, and other persons requiring tailored care is to be promoted.

(2) Guidelines for Disaster Prevention and Reconstruction from the Perspective of Gender Equality

In the Great East Japan Earthquake and other disasters that occurred in the past, there were issues such as that women's participation in various decision-making processes was not sufficiently ensured and thus the differences in needs between women and men were not taken into consideration. Based on this reflection, the aforementioned Basic Disaster Management Plan has introduced a gender perspective. In May 2022, the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office prepared the "Women's Perspective for Strengthening Disaster Response Capability: Guidelines for disaster prevention and reconstruction from the perspective of gender equality" for the purpose of reflecting this perspective in local disaster prevention plans, shelter operation manuals, cooperation among the departments and bureaus in charge of disaster prevention/crisis management and the departments and bureaus in charge of gender equality/welfare departments and bureaus, etc. within the local government, and the development of local disaster prevention leaders of the community, etc., thereby strengthening local disaster response capability.

These Guidelines consist of three parts: Part 1 "Basic policies;" Part 2 "Necessary initiatives at each phase of disaster response;" and Part 3 "Useful materials."

In Part 1, the following seven basic principles are outlined:

- Promoting gender equality during normal times as the foundation of disaster management
- Assigning women to leadership roles
- Recognizing how men and women are affected differently by disasters
- Respecting the human rights of men and women and ensuring their safety and security
- Establishing necessary cooperation systems with the private sector that incorporate a gender perspective
- Clarifying the roles of Gender Equality Departments and Gender Equality Promotion Centers
- Considering women's needs when addressing persons requiring tailored care

Part 2 outlines the items to be prepared in normal times, the initial response phase, evacuation life, and recovery/reconstruction. Part 3 provides: checklists that can be used immediately on site, such as stockpile check sheets, evacuation shelter check sheets, and sex-disaggregated data check sheets; formats for posting materials; and referential sentences.

In addition, a survey on the status of initiatives taken by local governments based on these Guidelines has been conducted annually since 2021, and the results are “visualized” in the form of a map. The results of the survey are published on the website of the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office to promote initiatives of local governments.

(3) Formulation of the Third WPS Action Plan
Detailed in Q32 (3).

Section Four: National Institutions and Processes

33. Please describe your country's national strategy or action plan for gender equality, including its name, the period it covers, its priority, funding and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5.

1) Reflection of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Basic Plan for Gender Equality

Japan has set forth a Basic Plan for Gender Equality based on the Basic Act for Gender Equal Society.

The current plan is the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality—Toward a Reiwa Society Where All Women and Girls Can Thrive and Achieve Their Full Potential (the Fifth Basic Plan), which covers the five-year period from FY2021 to FY2025.

This Plan aims to achieve a society by the 2030s in which everyone can be empowered without being conscious of their gender and there is no gender imbalance among people in leadership positions. The Plan sets forth that the government is to promote initiatives with the aim of achieving the target of increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions to approximately 30% of the total as early as possible during the 2020s as a milestone.

The Fifth Basic Plan clearly states that gender equality and a gender perspective are to be reflected in various measures (gender mainstreaming) and all stakeholders, including government agencies, private companies, and young people and other civil society, are to work together, and thereby further promote initiatives. In this way, Japan is working to contribute to the promotion of international initiatives, including the achievement of Goal 5 and the entire SDGs, by fulfilling Japan's responsibilities in cooperation with the international community.

As for the budget, necessary funds are secured every year based on the Basic Plan for Gender Equality.

(2) Development of Systems for the Promotion of SDGs

The Government of Japan has established the SDGs Promotion Headquarters (headed by the Prime Minister) in the Cabinet, held meetings of the Sustainable Development Goals Promotion Headquarters Executive Board (the members of the Executive Board are officials of relevant administrative agencies) in order to promote flexible coordination among relevant administrative agencies, and formulated the Sustainable Development Goals Implementation Guiding Principles. With the aim of achieving the SDGs in and outside of Japan by 2030, the Government of Japan is committed to strengthening and accelerating specific initiatives while paying attention to the interconnections among the goals. The Sustainable Development Goals Implementation Guiding Principles Revised Edition (partially revised in December 2023) call for, as has been emphasized in the previous Implementation Guiding Principles, that in advancing initiatives, full attention is to be paid to the fact that respect for human rights and gender equality should be realized across all goals, and that cooperation and collaboration with all stakeholders in Japan are to be continued.

34. Please describe your country's system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.

Although the percentage of the national budget related to gender equality and women's empowerment is not tracked, the outline and achievements of related budgets are used as reference materials for the annual report to the Diet based on the Basic Act for Gender Equal Society.

With regard to Official Development Assistance, the government tracks and publicizes aid performance in gender equality cases in accordance with the definition of the "DAC Policy Marker on Gender Equality" set by the OECD Development Assistance Committee. The "G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps" also includes "percentage of gender equality cases in ODA" as one of its indicators.

35. What formal mechanisms are in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

(1) Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

The Government of Japan emphasizes collaboration with civil society and various other stakeholders in order to realize gender equality and women's empowerment. Specifically, the Liaison Conference for the Promotion of Gender Equality—consisting of 100 or more members from economic, labor, and educational circles, the media, women's organizations and other NPOs and NGOs, and academia—engages in an exchange of information and opinions with wide range of sectors and all levels of society and forms a collaborative network with regard to gender equality and women's empowerment.

(2) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

In order for a wide range of related parties to promote Japan's initiatives to achieve the SDGs in cooperation with one another, the "SDGs Promotion Round Table Meetings" are held under the SDGs Promotion Headquarters, where relevant parties from government, NGOs, NPOs, experts, private sectors, international organizations, and various groups gather and exchange opinions.

The meetings are held to exchange opinions on the government's formulation of the SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles. After the Implementation Guiding Principles are formulated, the meetings are used to check the status on the implementation of initiatives and exchange opinions about review of the Principles, as well as to exchange opinions on other initiatives for the achievement of the SDGs in Japan. Specifically, the first meeting was held in September 2016, and 18 meetings have been held since then through May 2024.

Furthermore, the SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles Revised Edition approved by the SDGs Promotion Headquarters (headed by the Prime Minister) in December 2023 reflects the fact that a large number of opinions regarding gender equality were received in the invitation for public comments during the formulation process. Accordingly, the Guiding Principles set forth, as important items, that respect for human rights and gender equality should be realized across all goals, as well as the realization of women's empowerment including acceleration of appointment of women to higher positions.

In the Guidelines, the category of “gender” was added to the list of stakeholders who promote the SDGs for the first time and recognized women and girls as stakeholders. The Guidelines also emphasize that it is important for various stakeholders to share gender perspectives.

36. Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report.

In formulating this report, the Cabinet Office worked on a government-wide basis in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant ministries and agencies. Also, the “Hearing”—a session to exchange opinions and engage in dialogue widely with civil society—was held under the leadership of the Liaison Conference for the Promotion of Gender Equality regarding what should be included in the report and the draft of the report. Stakeholders including a civil society organization, women’s rights group, and group of academic researchers took the stage as panelists in this session, and exchanged a variety of opinions along with participants from the general public.

In addition, public comments were widely invited from civil society via the website of the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office on matters that should be included in this report, such as an evaluation of the government’s initiatives over the past five years, fields facing challenges, and what needs to be addressed over the next five years.

Details on these dialogues with civil society are presented in the attached Reference Material.

37. Please describe your country’s action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.

(1) Response to the Results of the Assessment by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

The Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality sets forth that, based on the opinions of and discussions at the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Commission on the Status of Women, the Government of Japan will actively comply with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and promote initiatives in line with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The Government of Japan has already submitted its ninth report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in September 2021, and the assessment of the report was conducted in October 2024. In the assessment of the 7th and 8th reports, the results of the assessment were reported to the Council for Gender Equality, and the Council requested the relevant ministries and agencies to report on their response policies, and requested the government to take the necessary initiatives, etc.

(2) Response to the Outcome of the Universal Periodic Review

The fourth periodic review of the Japanese Government’s report was held on January 31st, 2023, and the recommendations included in the report of the Working Group were adopted by the Working Group on February 3rd, 2023. Subsequently, in July 2023, the document was officially adopted at the 53rd

session of the Human Rights Council. Japan also submitted to the UN, for adoption, its views, in writing, on the recommendations made by each country.

Japan intends to appropriately follow up on the recommendations on which Japan has consented to follow up.

Section Five: Data and Statistics

38. What are the most important areas in which your country has made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level?

(1) Enhancement of Gender Statistics

The Fifth Basic Plan clearly states that it is important to enhance statistics to objectively understand the situation of men and women (gender statistics) in order to realize a gender-equal society and promote women's empowerment. Based on this recognition, the Government of Japan has made efforts to understand sex-disaggregated data and promote the provision of statistics that contribute to analysis by various classifications such as age and region. Upon implementation of the statistical surveys, the government reviewed the necessity of taking gender diversity into consideration.

Specifically, from the viewpoint of enhancing gender statistics, the “Statistical Survey on the Development Status of Gender Statistics” was conducted to investigate the availability of sex-disaggregated data in fundamental statistics and other statistics. In addition, a lecture on gender statistics was held at the Statistical Research and Training Institute of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications to train officials in charge of statistics in the national and local governments.

(2) Publication of Monetary Valuation of Unpaid Work

The government has periodically measured the value of unpaid work for the purpose of comparing the value of household service work and volunteer activities with GDP and other purposes. In response to the release of the 2021 edition of the Survey on Time Use and Leisure Activities, the amounts of monetary valuation of unpaid work were estimated using the latest data, and the results were compiled and released in May 2023.

Household work, family care/nursing and other unpaid housework activities, and volunteer activities within households are collectively referred to as “unpaid work,” which can be substituted by a third party (i.e., provision from one economic entity to another with or without charge), and are generally defined in the System of National Accounts (SNA) as activities within the boundaries of production (“general production boundary”). However, for example, unpaid household activities are not defined as activities within the core SNA production boundary (“statistical production boundary”) because they are performed outside the market and are not recorded in the accounts that constitute its core system. For this reason, some countries, particularly Western countries, have been making an attempt in which they estimate amounts of monetary valuation of unpaid work in households as a different account (satellite account), make it comparable to market economic activities while maintaining the link with the core SNA production boundary, and then compare it with gross domestic product (GDP). The government has conducted and publicized surveys five times in the past for purposes such as comparing the monetary value of unpaid work in Japanese households with GDP.

1997: Monetary Valuation of Unpaid Work (years covered: 1981, 1986, 1991)

1998: Monetary Valuation of Unpaid Work in 1996 (year covered: 1996)

2009: Research Study on the Monetary Valuation of Unpaid Work (years covered: 2001, 2006)

2013: Monetary Valuation of Household Work and Other Unpaid Work - Re-estimation Based on 2011 Data (year covered: 2011)

2018: Monetary Valuation of Unpaid Work (year covered: 2016)

The 2023 survey is a continuation of previous research studies conducted so far. Specifically, in response to the release of the latest year's survey results (conducted in 2021) of the Survey on Time Use

and Leisure Activities by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, which is time-use data, the monetary valuation of unpaid work, etc. is estimated using the same method as before. The concepts and methods used in this survey are based on the Guide on Valuing Unpaid Household Service Work compiled and published by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in June 2017 (hereinafter referred to as the “Guide” in this chapter) and the “WS.3 Unpaid Household Service Work,” which is given on the UN Statistics Division website.

39. Over the next five years, what are your country’s priorities for strengthening national gender statistics?

Based on the “Fourth Term Master Plan Concerning the Development of Official Statistics” (approved by the Cabinet on March 28th, 2023) and referring to the Gender Statistics Manual of the United Nations Statistics Division, as well as by taking into consideration the needs in measures and understanding the data by gender as much as possible, the Government of Japan is committed to creating and promoting statistics that contribute to understanding and analysis by age group/prefecture.

With regard to statistics to objectively understand the situation of men and women (gender statistics), the government will, based on the Fifth Basic Plan, continue to make efforts to understand sex-disaggregated data, and will also make efforts to be able to understand and analyze data by age group/prefecture. In addition, the government will release important statistical information on gender equality in a form that is easy for the public to understand and will promote secondary use of such information based on the Statistics Act.

40. What gender-specific indicators has your country prioritized for monitoring progress on the SDGs?

In order to accurately understand the degree of achievement of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the SDGs, 32 of the global indicators that the United Nations has announced as being related to gender are published on the website of the Government of Japan in both Japanese and English. In selecting indicators, evaluation by overseas and domestic research institutes, etc., status of review and reconsideration of global indicators, and status of review of the local SDG indicators were taken into account to enhance the progress evaluation system and improve transparency.

41. Which data disaggregations are routinely provided by major surveys in your country?

Normally, major statistical surveys provide “geographic location,” “income,” “sex/gender,” “age,” and “marital status.”

Section Six: Conclusion and Next Steps

(1) Realization of a Society in Which Both Men and Women Can Develop Careers

Gender equality is an important and steadfast policy of the Government of Japan and a norm shared by the international community. It is also an essential element in realizing a society where all people can live a worthwhile life and diversity is respected, as well as in the sustainable development of Japan's economy and society.

Expanding women's participation is considered to have positive effects in various aspects. For example, in companies, it can inspire innovation and encourage business transformation through improving diversity, leading to higher corporate value. In the international community, it has been pointed out that when women participate in the formulation of a peace agreement, the agreement is more likely to be maintained over a long period of time. In the current situation in Japan, it is mostly women who are forced to choose between career development and various life events. Perpetuating this situation, there exist structural issues such as labor practices centering on long working hours, unpaid work hours of household work, childcare, and similar that are unfairly weighted toward women, as well as the underlying stereotyped perceptions of gender roles.

It is essential to take further in-depth measures to aim for resolving these structural issues. To this end, in order to foster momentum for women's empowerment in society as a whole through visible initiatives, the government will accelerate appointment of women to higher positions in companies by further increasing the ratio of women executives, steadily promoting the training and promotion of women, and strongly building a pipeline for the appointment of women to managerial positions and, eventually, to executives. As a result, not only will each woman be motivated to develop her career, but also diversity and vitality in social and economic decision-making will increase, inspiring innovation and encouraging business transformation. In other words, the public and private sectors will thereby realize a virtuous cycle of women's empowerment and economic growth together.

At the same time, it is important to create an environment in which both men and women can balance their life events and career development. It is also necessary to strengthen initiatives aimed at improving women's income and economic independence, such as promoting diverse and flexible work styles regardless of gender, reducing the burden of household work and childcare imposed on women by encouraging men to share the burden of household work and childcare, and encouraging career advancement through the improvement of productivity by reskilling, including developing female digital human resources. Thus, by promoting both the fostering of momentum for women's empowerment and the creation of an environment that supports career development, the government is committed to steadfastly steering the course toward the realization of a society in which both men and women can develop their careers according to their preferences.

(2) Increasing the Percentage of Women in Leadership Positions

Since 2003, the Government of Japan has set a target of "increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions to at least 30% by 2020 in all fields in society," and the public and private sectors have been promoting initiatives to achieve this target. However, the government recognizes that while women's participation has been progressing in some fields, there have been fields in which progress has lagged behind, such as political and economic fields.

The reasons for this can be summarized as: (A) in the political field, there are difficulties in balancing running for office and serving as a Diet or local assembly member and family life, opportunities for human resource development are insufficient, and candidates and politicians face harassment, etc., and (B) in the economic field, the building of a pipeline from hiring women to appointing them to managerial positions and executives is still in the development stage.

The Fifth Basic Plan aims to “create a society where everyone can take an active role without being conscious of their gender and there is no gender imbalance in leadership positions by the 2030s,” and as a milestone, it aims to “achieve the target of increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions to approximately 30% of the total as early as possible during the 2020s.” The Government of Japan is committed to making every effort to achieve this target.

(3) Acceleration of Initiatives to Eradicate Violence

To eradicate violence by spouses or intimate partners, sexual crimes, and sexual violence, amendments were made to criminal laws such as the amendment of the Spousal Violence Prevention Act and creation of the crime of Sexual Intercourse Without Consent and the crime of Recording Sexual Images, etc., and initiatives have been implemented based on the "Policy for Further Strengthening of Measures Against Sexual Crimes and Sexual Violence" among others. However, considering the fact that there are still many victims who have never consulted anyone, it is necessary to continue to strengthen initiatives to prevent and raise awareness of violence by a spouse or intimate partner, sexual crimes, sexual violence, and other forms of violence, and to develop an environment where it is easier for victims to seek consultation.

(4) General Remarks

Gender equality is a top priority issue in itself, and in the midst of globalization, initiatives for gender equality are required in order to enhance the well-being of each and every citizen and to ensure the sustainable development of Japan’s economy and society.

Moreover, it is necessary to make strong efforts toward gender equality with a sense of urgency.

Promoting initiatives to realize a gender-equal society will lead to the realization of an inclusive society that embraces a wide range of diverse people, including those of different ages, nationalities, and sexual orientation and gender identity, and in which all people can feel happiness.