

Indo-Japan Consultation on
'Women at Work and Changing Social Norms'
Venue: The Taj Mahal Hotel, Mansingh Road, New Delhi
Date: Thursday, 27th July, 2017

- * H.E. Mr. Suresh Prabhu, Minister of Railways
- * Ms. Vasvi Bharatram, President, FICCI Ladies Organization
- * Mr. Deepak Premnarayan, Executive Chairman and Founder,
ICS Group
- * Dr. Miwa Kato, Dr. Rebecca Tavares, UN Women
- * Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

Good Morning.

My colleagues and I are truly grateful to all of you that you have accepted our invitation and found time to participate in this programme to discuss “Women at Work and Changing Social Norms”. The issue today is of immense relevance, socially, politically, and, of course, economically.

We are looking at our experts here, luminaries in their own fields of work, to share their opinions and perspectives – encouraging us to explore a diverse range of related subjects.

Since I assumed the post of ambassador of Japan to India, I have strongly wished for India and Japan to work jointly for women's rights and women's empowerment.

Therefore, I am particularly happy to be part of this symposium, which is jointly organized by Japan, India and UN Women.

At the 2013 UN General Assembly , Prime Minister Abe in his speech pledged that Japan was keen to contribute to create a society in which “women shine”. Half of his speech focused on how Japan can take a lead in this endeavor and transform it into a global concern. The UN Women could then play the role of an active partner.

The speech, pragmatic yet impassioned, won kudos in the global arena. Heartened by the response, Japan was now determined to not let the pace slacken. In the following year 2014, the "World Assembly for Women WAW!" was introduced to the international players, as evidence to prove Japan meant business.

Since then, this WAW! symposium has become a regular annual event where leading women and men from various fields discuss relevant issues regarding women's rights and gender equality across the globe.

We are working hard to expand our reach by connecting WAW! to the worldwide network, and transforming it into a global movement with concrete outcomes.

I believe that today's symposium is also a manifestation of this global movement.

As one of the persons who initiated this entire process, I believe that we have moved ahead with commendable pace. But we still have a very long way to go.

In this regard, I would like to highlight three points:

First, it is absolutely imperative to make the men active partners in empowerment initiatives. They must be familiar with the basic issues. This is particularly important to achieve better work/life balance and to see more women leaders in business and political fields.

Second, women's rights and gender equality issues should be incorporated in a holistic manner in all areas of development agenda. I am pleased to see that SDG's are formulated in this manner. Japan's Official Development Assistance Charter clearly describes that it promotes the participation of women at all stages of development cooperation, and works more aggressively to ensure that all women receive fairly the benefits of development.

Third, we should not forget that the ultimate goal of these initiatives is to bring about a society where women and men shine side by side, complementing each other and working together on equal terms.

Japan remains committed to fulfill its social obligations by continuing to contribute for the realization of a "society where women shine" in India.

Japan is geared up to play a proactive role in this nation-wide movement - in partnership with the government or by forging alliances with local communities and NGOs, in particular at the grassroots level. We have already done so in a number of projects.

And we are ready to expand cooperation, especially in sanitation, education, and vocational training initiatives.

In my previous capacity, I worked closely with UN Women. I fully understand the role and mission of UN Women and share them wholeheartedly.

In India, Japan has supported UN Women's "Delhi Safe City Free of Violence against Women and Girls Programme". We look forward to collaborating further with UN Women.

I shall end by saying that I hope we may engage today in a rich and enlightening discussion and make this symposium a great success.

Thank you.

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