

# International Conference for Women in Business

(Publicity)

## Conference seeks to hone skills for business, communication

Organizer Sasaki hopes to foster new momentum to help nation in its globalization process

Hiroko Nakata  
STAFF WRITER

Decades have passed since Japan started focusing on the importance of its "globalization." Still, not many business or political leaders in the country are able to voice their opinions in English at international conferences. Not many are invited to attend such events in the first place.

Situations are not much different even when the language they use is Japanese. At domestic meetings, men and women often fail to deliver clear messages to other participants.

Such frustration prompted Kaori Sasaki to choose "We move the world forward" as the theme for this year's International Conference for Women in Business to spotlight the significance of human resources with global mind-sets and to define what the often-used Japanese term "global human resources" means.

"In recent years, I've been concerned that Japan needs to open up more to the world," Sasaki told The Japan Times in a recent interview. "If people can't express what they think, they can't make themselves understood and they can't even participate in the global community."

The lack of global communicators in the country may be particularly irritating for Sasaki, who worked for many years as a TV reporter and a newscaster using English. She is the president of Unicul International, Inc., a consulting firm providing interpreting and translating services to clients, and president and CEO of ewoman, Inc., a women-oriented marketing and consulting firm that presents the conference.

The 17th edition of the International Conference for Women in Business, of which The Japan Times is a sponsor, will be held Saturday in the Odaiba district of Tokyo. The conference has been held annually since Sasaki founded the event in 1996.

Regarding communication, Sasaki said that, for example, the skill to make presentations is not only important when having discussions with people from other countries, but also for winning business contracts.

When Japanese companies want to sell their technologies abroad, they need to explain how their technologies are superior to others.

"They should explain to the outside aggressively, not just wait for other people to understand them," she said. Showing their "vision" and "passion" are also important, she added.

To support participants to



Driven: Kaori Sasaki, president and CEO of ewoman, Inc., speaks to The Japan Times on July 20 in Tokyo. HIROKO NAKATA

gain global viewpoints and brush up communication skills, the 17th conference will invite speakers from India, China and the United States, besides Japan, and provide a multitude of

current" in the society that can support a broad range of working women and move them forward. She was encouraged by a U.S. estimate that more than half of U.S. corporate execu-

Another purpose of the conference is to provide chances for working women to have practical knowledge to survive the business world, such as marketing, corporate ethics and corporate politics.

To her surprise, Sasaki faced criticism from a business lobby that pressured her to not launch such a conference for women. The group said her plan was a waste of time because women, freelancers and foreign companies were not the mainstream of Japanese business.

The experience roused her to challenge the discriminating view and drove her to make the conference successful, she said.

Surveys collected every year after the conference show that more than 98 percent of the respondents are satisfied with the event.

One of the features of the conference is a sponsorship program that was inaugurated last year. Individual or corporate sponsors can contribute to help people in need of financial support, such as high school or college students in disaster-hit areas, to attend the meeting. This year, 31 participants will be supported through this program.

Another feature is the participation of lawmakers unlike those at other events where politicians make speeches trying to attract the attention of potential voters. Sasaki invites lawmakers who she has had conversations with and are serious in exploring how to integrate women in society. They are also willing to discuss with female workers and listen to their voices at the conference, she said.

"I hope the conference will provide chances for them to listen to women working full time," Sasaki said.

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KAORI SASAKI, FOUNDER, INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR WOMEN IN BUSINESS

opinions on the annual theme. Around 700 participants, men and women, are expected to attend the conference.

The speakers include Stuti Jalan, founder and managing director for public relations, brand consultancy and social media company Crosshairs Communication in India, Soichi Noguchi, a Japanese astronaut who returned from the International Space Station in June 2010, and Lin Kobayashi, founder of Japan's first international boarding school, in Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture, to develop young leaders. In the afternoon, participants join discussions under topics such as "Women Making an Impact in Asia" and "Women and the Economy" with the speakers.

"I've always planned the conference so that it can cause a 'chemical reaction' that has never been seen elsewhere," Sasaki said, explaining that she hopes a lineup of speakers from a wide range of fields, from business to politics, will create new momentum.

The reason Sasaki started the conference in 1996 was because she wanted to create a "large

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KAORI SASAKI



Large scale: Hundreds of people gather at the 15th International Conference for Women in Business held in Tokyo on July 24, 2010, under the theme "Making a difference." COURTESY OF EWOMAN, INC.

## About the 17th annual International Conference for Women in Business

The 17th International Conference for Women in Business will be held Saturday, July 28, at the Grand Pacific Le Daiba hotel in Tokyo.

The conference has been held every summer since 1996 by ewoman, Inc., founded by Kaori Sasaki (read The Japan Times interview at left). The Japan Times is a sponsor of this year's conference.

The conference is open to anyone who has strong aspirations, regardless of occupation, age, nationality, gender or social standing.

Many participants are active in the business world, entrepreneurs, individuals who want to start a business or run their own business, or freelancers.

The objective of the conference is to provide participants with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed as business professionals today and to provide an opportunity for active exchange, stimulation from international perspectives

and mutual support among peers who share a strong determination to succeed.

The one-day conference begins and ends with opportunities for networking with the hundreds of other participants, both men and women.

The presentations begin at 10 a.m. with speakers invited from around the world talking about a topic based on the annual theme. The theme for this year is "We move the world forward" and encourages people who strive to understand and accept a diverse range of worldviews, which fuels the ability to create new alternatives. In other words, these are the people that will literally move the world forward.

Invited speakers are from such countries as Japan, China, India and the U.S. The speakers come from a diverse range of fields, including business, science, government and nonprofit organizations. Interactive discussion sessions in the

afternoon allow participants to talk in detail with the speakers on a variety of issues.

This year, the discussions will include topics such as "Information Technology is Changing the World and Our Future," "Raise Children that Contribute to the World," "What You Should Do by 35 to Advance Your Career" and "Learning from Global Leaders." Participants can select two 90-minute discussions. Some of the discussions are conducted in English. The conference ends at 8 p.m.

### • The Japan Times for Women interview

The first issue of the magazine The Japan Times for Women includes a special interview with Kaori Sasaki conducted by Japan Times Deputy Managing Editor Sayuri Daimon. In the interview, Sasaki talks about a range of topics, including tips to balance work and child rearing.

The Japan Times for Women is available at major book stores.





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