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WAW! and W20 Special

SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 2019



Empowering women globally

TARO KONO
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

This is our fifth World Assembly for Women (WAW!) since it started in 2014. I hope that this meeting will be an opportunity for a wide range of people to discuss various challenges which Japan and the international community are currently facing, regardless of gender and age, while reviewing the previous achievements. During the panel discussion I will take part in with female foreign ministers, we would like

to reaffirm the importance of women's empowerment through exchanges of candid opinions and deliver strong messages to the world. I am sure that holding WAW! and the Women 20 will further increase the momentum of women's empowerment both in Japan and abroad.



From top left to right: Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his wife, Akie, enjoy green tea with participants at the second World Assembly for Women in Tokyo in 2015; Susana Balbo, the chair of Women 20 (W20) Argentina 2018, presents the communique to Argentine President Mauricio Macri on Oct. 3 at W20 Argentina in Buenos Aires. From far left to right: Vice chair of Goldman Sachs Japan Co. Kathy Matsui, Executive Director of the International Trade Centre Arancha Gonzalez, President of Japan International Cooperation Agency Shinichi Kitaoka, and Indonesian Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Minister Susi Pudjiastuti at a WAW! 2017 panel discussion; W20 roundtable hosted by the Royal Institute of International Affairs in Tokyo on Nov. 20. KYODO / MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF JAPAN / W20 JAPAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Meetings aim to close gender gaps, promote diversity

Initiatives focus on discussing women's economic growth

This year, Japan will host the G20 summit in June in Osaka, as well as the fifth World Assembly for Women (WAW!) and the Women 20 (W20) Japan 2019, which will be held jointly at the Hotel New Otani Tokyo in Chiyoda Ward on March 23 and 24.

WAW! is an initiative led by the Japanese government to realize "the society where women shine." This annual conference has been developing in line with the promotion of women's active participation in society, one of the key policies of the current administration led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

"Let's collect the wisdom from everyone regardless of sex or age, and draw a dream for a better society," said Abe in a message on the government's WAW! and W20 website. He also mentioned that for the first time in the history of WAW!, female foreign ministers from around the world are invited.

The W20 is one of the G20 engagement groups that make policy recommendations to the G20. The first W20 meeting was held in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2015 to act on the 25 by 25 commitment of reducing the labor force participation gap between men and women to 25 percent by 2025, adopted at

the G20 Brisbane summit in 2014.

Based on the G20's shared understanding that women's advancement in society reinforces economic growth, the annual conference has been the driving force for achieving the Brisbane commitment over the past four years.

Argentina was last year's host for the G20 summit and the meetings of G20's engagement groups, including the W20. Led by Susana Balbo, the chair of the W20 Argentina 2018, four topics were discussed — labor inclusion, digital inclusion, financial inclusion and rural development.

The achievements of the conference were compiled into policy recommendations that were presented to Argentine President Mauricio Macri, leader of the G20 in 2018. As a result, "gender mainstreaming strategy" was chosen as one of the main focuses of last year's G20 summit, prompting extensive dialogue among the leaders of the world's major economies on gender equality.

In the G20 leaders' declaration issued after the summit held in Buenos Aires on Nov. 30 and Dec. 1, leaders promised to continue promoting initiatives aimed at eliminating all forms of gender-based discrimination and violence. Leaders also committed to promote women's economic empowerment, access to leadership and decision-making positions, as well as the development of women's digital skills and participation in high-tech sectors. Taking a

step forward from this declaration and the achievement of last year's G20 and W20, this year's WAW! and W20 in Tokyo will call for substantial actions and results.

Abe's administration has been making efforts to enhance women's participation in various sectors. WAW! is one such effort. The Headquarters for Creating a Society in which All Women Shine was established in 2014 under the initiative of the government to create frameworks and guidelines for making policies that encourage more participation of women in society.

The government has also been promoting the hiring of more female public service personnel and supporting them to achieve better work-life balance, to make the government itself a model employer.

Abe's administration also enacted the Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace in 2016. It requires all companies with over 300 employees to assess and analyze the situation and issues, make and announce action plans, set numerical targets and disclose information and status of the progress.

The wage gap between men and women is shrinking gradually. Women's wages were 73.4 percent of men's in 2017, an improvement of 0.4 percent from the previous year, according to statistics published by the Cabinet Office. The ratio of female board members at listed companies increased from 3.4 percent in 2016 to 3.7

percent in 2017.

In the World Economic Forum's global gender equality rankings for 2018, Japan was 110th out of 149 countries covered in the survey. The rise from last year's 144th place reflected the improvement in wage gap and increased women's participation in the workplace. Still, it requires ceaseless efforts to make Japan more inclusive, and there are companies that have been committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in their own ways.

"The W20 represents 2.3 billion women. Women with diverse backgrounds have pulled each other together guided by the firm bond of common awareness."

HARUNO YOSHIDA, CO-CHAIR OF THE W20

Philip Morris Japan Ltd. offers extensive support to its female workers and a flexible work environment for all of its employees. Women accounted for 40 percent of the total new hires in 2018; 2.5 times more than five years ago. The pay gap between men and women is a

minimal 0.4 percent.

Google Japan collaborates with other companies in conducting research and providing support contents to promote flexible and efficient work styles. As part of its Women's Initiative within the Asia-Pacific region, it collects ideas to create better work environments for women.

In terms of working women's health, Rohto Pharmaceutical Co. offers programs to help increase iron intake (deficiency is a widespread issue) and improve women's unidentified health complaints. It also offers free rubella vaccinations to all of its employees, and works to protect pregnant workers from the risk of infection.

During the WAW! and W20, academics, ministers and government officials, business leaders, representatives of international organizations and various other players from around the world exchange ideas and insights to drive change in every corner of the globe.

The two-day conference consists of WAW! sessions, W20 sessions and joint sessions. In the opening joint session, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet will both speak.

Under the grand theme of this year's WAW! meeting, WAW! for Diversity, particular topics such as "Women's Participation in Conflict Prevention, Peace Building and Post Conflict Recovery" and "Diversity

for Growth: Corporate Management and Working Environment" will be discussed by panels during the sessions. Abe explained in his message that "youth representatives will participate in each session to convey their messages of the future generation."

The W20's vision for this year is "Closing the Gender Gap for New Prosperity." "Elimination of gender gap, which is the Sustainable Development Goal 5, is the engine powering new global growth," said Haruno Yoshida, co-chair of the W20, ex-vice chair of the Board of Councillors of Keidanren and ex-CEO of BT Japan.

Yoshida describes the W20 as a "mass of willpower of our fellow women of different generations and origins, on a shared mission as women who have been born into this era."

This year, the W20 will focus on four pillars — labor equity, financial equity, digital equity and governance. The W20 sessions will facilitate discussions on themes such as "Creation of New Market Value by Women Entrepreneurs" and "Towards the Gender Equality in the Digital Era."

"The W20 represents 2.3 billion women. Women with diverse backgrounds have pulled each other together guided by the firm bond of common awareness," said Yoshida.

The joint conference of WAW! and the W20 will be a milestone in further closing the gender gap where diversity thrives in order to attain new growth.

WAW! and W20 Special

Addressing Japan’s imbalanced gender representation

Mari Miura knows all about the gender equality situation in Japan, especially as it relates to parity in politics.

In her capacity as a professor of political science at Sophia University, Miura was involved in the legislative process for Japan’s Gender Parity Law, which was enacted last year, when she served as an academic advisor to the working team of the All-partisan Caucus for the Promotion of Gender Equality in Politics that composed the bill.

Over the next few months, the efficacy of that enactment will be put to the test, when first local and then Upper House elections take place. And although that bill is nonbinding, Miura believes its influence is already evident.

“I see only positive signs, because, for example, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan has already said it will make a target of 40 percent of women for proportional representation, and other parties, such as the National Democratic Party, which has promised 30 percent female representation, and the Japanese Communist Party, with 50 percent, are doing likewise,” she said.

Even the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, where a Cabinet reshuffle by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in October last year left just one woman standing, has made noises about giving “more competitive” female candidates the opportunity to take over previously secure, and predominantly male, incumbents’ seats.

“We’ll have to wait and see how much the



Mari Miura, a professor at Sophia University, at her office in Tokyo. YOSHIKAKI MIURA

Gender Parity Law pushes up women’s representation, but I think this year there will be some movement in this regard,” said Miura, among whose books is 2015’s “Watashitachi no koe o gikai e: Daihyōsei minshushugi no saisei” (“Making Our Voices Heard in Parliament: The Revival of Representative Democracy”).

Considering Japan’s present situation, even the smallest increase would make a difference. Currently female lawmakers make

up just 20 percent of members in the House of Councillors, while the world average is 24.1 percent.

The Lower House fares even worse, she added, with just 10 percent of its members being women, far short of the global average of 24.3 percent and a country mile from the government’s target of 30 percent by 2020.

“Japan has lagged far behind, especially if you look at the Lower House, where Japan ranks 165th out of 193 countries,” noted

Miura, who was also deputy director of the Promotion of Gender Equality Office at Sophia University and a driving force behind the “Parité” campaign, based on the French idea of absolute gender equity in politics.

“Japan’s representativeness is the lowest among OECD countries, G7 countries, or even G20 countries, so basically it ranks poorly in the world by any measure.”

While the passing of the parity law marks a milestone in Japan’s faltering struggle toward equality, Japan has other hurdles to clear before it can truly set about addressing that imbalance, Miura said.

First is finding a way to boost women’s confidence to rise to positions of prominence and, more importantly, to actively act as role models for younger generations.

This includes in business, where currently women’s representation in executive positions is the same as the Lower House — 10 percent — while in Europe the figure is 30 percent and in the U.S. 40 percent.

In this regard, one of the problems is Japan’s patriarchal society that expects little of note out of women, who ironically outperform their male counterparts throughout the education spectrum, Miura said.

“We have been told over and over, ‘Don’t fail, failure is a bad thing,’ and it is for girls, but everybody tolerates boys making stupid mistakes,” she commented, adding that this perpetuates women’s lack of self confidence and, ultimately, aspiration toward higher positions.

It also reduces the effectiveness of those women in leadership positions as role models for younger generations.

“There are some role models, some CEOs and Cabinet ministers, for example, but in a masculinized, male-dominated culture there are only two ways for a woman to survive: Either internalize that culture — just behave like men — or be a nice girl, be feminine, and don’t be threatening to men. ... Either way, you have to please men. If you don’t, you’ll fail as a woman. That’s the message. That’s why we need more and new role models and I think more importantly, a sisterhood.”

In the business world, an overhaul of the current system, which values absolute commitment to the company over ability, is imperative in order to move talented women away from the non-regular employment that the majority of them are forced into, especially those whose “careers” are interrupted by childbirth.

“There is a structural problem that can only change if companies start evaluating employees’ skill over potential, which ultimately equals loyalty to the company, or how many hours you work,” said Miura.

“This automatically creates different tracks for men and women. It might have worked in the past, but now it’s impractical in terms of making use of women’s talent and companies globally are realizing they have to make use of women’s talent.”

In a societal context, meanwhile, a more

comprehensive system of child care and other facilities — plus a healthy dose of destigmatizing attitudes to third-party child care and stay-at-home-dads — would be a huge step, she said.

Meanwhile, Japan needs to find ways to build confidence in women, such as the school Miura has helped set up to develop Japan’s next generation of politicians, to ensure parity in society is achievable, she said.

At the same time, the attitudes of men, particularly those in power, also need to change toward women, starting with Japan’s shocking sexual harassment record.

In politics, meanwhile, Japan has to find a way to break the post-war mold of single-party domination, said Miura.

“You have to have power alternation to increase the number of women because there are open seats, and if the center-left parties, which tend to have more women representatives, win, you can increase the number of women representatives,” she said, adding that with each alternation of power, more and more women would be elected, as is evidenced in other countries such as Britain and France.

Japan’s first-past-the-post electoral system, which essentially means a low turnover of politicians and not much opportunity for power alternation, makes it difficult for aspiring women to enter politics, Miura added. “It’s the biggest cause of stagnation in terms of women’s representation.”

Social norms ‘hinder’ women’s career growth

Michiko Achilles says she and her husband have endured a difficult period of juggling work and raising their two daughters by handling it as if they were “playing games.”

The rule was simple. The one who finished their work early picked up their two daughters from day care. “Even if the time difference was only a few minutes, the one who finished first had to do it,” said Achilles, vice president of SAP Japan Co., with a chuckle. The same went for housework; whoever found a messy room first was the one to clean it up.

By sharing responsibilities with her husband, and with help from their neighbors and her mother when they both could not make it on time, Achilles continued to have challenging jobs, assuming leadership roles as a human resources development expert at global companies such as Citibank Japan Ltd. and Morgan Stanley Securities Co., and 3M. At Aozora Bank, she headed a group of all-male managers as a managing executive officer.

Looking back at those times when many companies did not have a system to support working parents like herself, Achilles said

the environment has definitely improved. Most companies today have programs to support their employees in balancing work and child rearing, with some even offering in-house day care centers.

Despite such improvements, currently about half of Japanese women who give birth to their first child quit working, as they shoulder the majority of domestic duties, including child rearing. According to Cabinet Office data compiled in 2016, men in households with children who are 6 years old or younger spend 1 hour and 23 minutes a day, on average, on household duties, which is the lowest figure among developed countries. Women, on the other hand, spend 7 hours and 34 minutes a day.

One of the major reasons for this is entrenched social norms, Achilles said.

“When I married, looking after family was considered a priority for women. And many — both men and women — are still carrying that notion. I sense that when I talk to people,” said Achilles, who is also a member of the Women 20 Japan 2019 Steering Committee. “And that, I believe, would take quite a long time to change.”

To change such ingrained stereotypical gender roles, Achilles noted that parenting and education are two important factors.

“I believe it’s important for children to grow up in a family (where both their mother and father share the housework). Parents are the first and closest role models they encounter. So they learn by looking at the way their parents are,” Achilles said.

“What they learn in school also plays a huge part. I know it has changed now, but for example, when I was a student, girls took home economics classes while boys had physical education.”

Having seen the career paths of many others as an expert in human resources and development, Achilles said women sometimes shy away from having more challenging jobs or being promoted to management positions. That is partly due to the influence of stereotypical gender roles or expectations from society, she explained. And that sometimes hinders women from elevating their careers, or taking on more challenging and responsible roles.

That is such a waste of talent, given that women often have the same or more poten-

tial than men to do an exceptional job, she said. “When I talk with people who work for human resources departments, I hear many saying women excel in performance. They said if they were to promote employees purely based on performance, many more women would be in senior positions,” Achilles said.

Although the number of women has increased at the entry or chief-level positions in Japan, when it comes to management levels, the ratio of women remains small. As for bringing up the numbers of women in senior-level positions in business, the important thing is to provide female employees support programs to develop their abilities and increase their confidence to take on more demanding roles, she said. For example, offering coaching to deal with different work and mentoring or sponsorship to help them overcome their hesitancy to climb the corporate ladder.

Such support catering to each employee’s needs is important for companies that strive to hire or promote women in the workforce to offset Japan’s rapidly graying



Michiko Achilles at her office in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward. YOSHIKAKI MIURA

and shrinking population, she pointed out.

Asked if she ever wanted to quit working, Achilles laughed and said, “A number of times.”

But her determination to do something to help people and the presence of her two daughters have kept Achilles going, pushing herself to new challenges.

“I’ve been pursuing a happy career and life that my daughters could be proud of. As I see them starting their own careers and working hard in recent years, I feel I should also keep trying my best,” she said.

“That determination, and with my daughters looking at how I live my life, has been a huge part of my motivation.”

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Supplementary events address health, career trends

A series of events addressing female empowerment in the workplace and women's health and happiness began in January. Spurred by the fifth World Assembly for Women in collaboration with Women 20, which are scheduled for March 23 and 24, and International Women's Day that fell on March 8, they will continue until May.

The bulk of these events will also take place in March and are hosted by various governments, municipalities, companies and other organizations.

One such event was the March 4 symposium, "Women Health Week Event," organized by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. Experts discussed health-related challenges faced by women at the Itoki Tokyo Innovation Center SYNQA in Chuo Ward.

The event began with a greeting by Yoshinori Oguchi, state minister of health, labor and welfare.

"Women's health leads to the vitality of society," Oguchi said to dozens of audience members, stressing the significance of helping women maintain their health.

The first presenter was Dr. Megumi Kawashima of Human Capital Development and Health Development Promotion at Kao Corp.

Kawashima, who is in charge of caring for employees at her company, explained that the difference between company doctors and regular doctors is that their mission is to prevent workers' health from deteriorating, as well as helping them balance work and health after recovering from illnesses.

She then showed a graph depicting an M-curve. The graph represents the trend of Japanese working women peaking right before typical child-rearing ages and then decreasing as they leave the workforce to care of their children for a number of years



A gynecologist gives a presentation on women's health to high school students as part of Kagayaki School program. This is one of 11 presentations being held across the country. BAYER HOLDING

before resuming their careers.

The curve showed a sharp dip in the '90s, but is currently much shallower, possibly indicating that support for working women has increased, or more women have chosen to delay or decided against having children. Kawashima is focused on preventing the latter and eliminating the dip in the curve.

Kawashima also addressed various health risks connected to menstruation and menopause. Female hormone disorder causes various symptoms across a wide age range. One of her slides showed a list of sex-specific conditions by age group. This showed that menstruation disorder can happen to women in their 20s and 30s, menopause can occur for women in their 40s and 50s and cervical and other cancers in female-specific organs are risks for

women in their 30s through 50s.

"Knowing about these situations will increase work performance of a company as a whole. Improving health literacy is important for any company," Kawashima said.

Noting that women tend to be diagnosed with cancer at a younger age than men, she said employers should encourage health checks for female-specific illnesses such as cervical and breast cancer. Holidays for health checks, infertility treatment and other medical treatment should be implemented and companies should set up a health consultation section for employees, she said.

The second speaker, Momo Hosokawa, representative director of Luvelli Tokyo & New York, delivered a presentation titled, "Traps working women tend to plunge into."

Luvelli Tokyo & New York is a non-profit organization to promote the health of mothers and children, and she shared it has been focusing on the health of working women for the past five years.

The organization has been engaged in joint research on *ransō nenrei*, which literally means the age of human eggs, or a benchmark of how inactive aging human eggs become, with Juntendo University, Rohto Pharmaceutical Co. and Sato Hospital, and found out Japanese women have difficulty getting pregnant because of poor nutrition and complications due to being underweight. After collecting data from working Japanese women, it learned that typical habits among working women can also contribute to this difficulty.

In the summer of 2014, Luvelli Tokyo & New York, in collaboration with Mitsubishi Estate Co., set up Marunouchi Hokenshitsu (Marunouchi Nurse's office) — an office where working women could receive health consultations. Data from



A panel discussion at the "Women Health Week Event" at Itoki Tokyo Innovation Center SYNQA in Chuo Ward on March 4. YOSHIAKI MIURA

the office shows Japanese working women tend to lack proper nutrition, sleep and exercise.

Hosokawa said a typical pattern involves skipping breakfast and prioritizing makeup or choosing clothes in the morning following a heavy dinner the previous evening after working late. Iron and vitamin consumption tends to decrease as working hours increase, but intake of alcohol and deep-fried food tends to increase, she said, adding that individuals who keep doing this for 10 or 20 years tend to suffer from calcium and iron deficiencies.

Such eating habits also increase the chances of diabetes. "You can be skinny and suffer from diabetes, and Japanese women have that tendency," she said.

Hosokawa recommended that women eat breakfast. "Anything is better than nothing, whether it's drinkable yogurt or a banana," she said, also noting that protein with breakfast is ideal, as is a healthy snack later on. Reducing caffeine intake when snacking and getting at least six hours of sleep is also ideal.

Yoshiko Yagi, general manager of Itoki Corp.'s Solution Development Department within the Solution Development Department Group and Research and Development Division, then delivered a presentation on Itoki's measures to improve employees' health.

Itoki won a third Healthy Life Expectancy Award in the corporation category

from the health ministry, for its "workcise" activities. Workcise refers to actions that are good for health and work, as defined by Itoki.

The office furniture company installed chairs with seats that move vertically and sofas employees can nap on, among other useful furniture. It allows employees to commute by bicycle and its floor plan was designed to maximize walking, she said. Itoki also focuses on female workers' health. Its goals for this year are to encourage female employees to undergo cancer screenings, create or renovate break rooms and nursing rooms, and conduct training sessions for those in managerial positions.

Following the three speakers, Kawashima and Hosokawa took part in a panel discussion and were joined by model and actress Mew Azama, and Miss World Japan 2018 Kanako Date. Freelance announcer Maiko Tenmei moderated.

Asked what women should do to make sure their bodies are biologically able to support pregnancy, Hosokawa said they should have periodic health checks to understand their physical condition. Many women are unaware of the level of body fat they need to maintain to avoid reducing chances of pregnancy, she added.

When asked about menstruation disorder, Kawashima said those whose periods occur every three months may think it's normal, but they are likely to feel tired and stressed because fatigue and stress cause

menstruation disorder. She said women should be mindful of this and visit a gynecologist if needed.

"As a model, I care a lot about health, but did not know human eggs could age. What I eat makes difference, so I will be considerate of what I eat," Azama said.

Date also decided to apply what she learned from the event. "I will review my exercise, nutrition and sleep habits," she said.

The event was followed by a sub-event at the same venue, comprising a symposium on prolonging healthy life expectancy that was attended by health experts and representatives of companies engaged in related activities.

The Women Health Week Event is just one of dozens of other official supplementary events for the fifth WAW! and W20. Other events include a matching event for female entrepreneurs and potential supporters, a symposium by female journalists on female empowerment, a discussion to support harassment victims and a networking event between Japanese and the Association of Southeast Asian Nation member countries' female entrepreneurs. There is also an event to allow child-rearing women experience working for a company for a few hours, a discussion on the importance of female leadership in developing countries and a symposium on the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals, among others.

Upcoming official side events

Below is the list of official side events for the fifth World Assembly for Women in partnership with Women 20. The list may expand later.

"Jibunbu gender x watashi" will be held at the Girl Scouts House, in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward, on March 31. It is a workshop organized by the Girl Scouts of Japan for high school students to study gender-related issues.

"Beauty aesthetician training" will be held in Ginza, in Tokyo's Chuo Ward, from May 1 to 5. The event, organized by Hoho Co., will provide free lessons on aesthetics, hospitality and management knowledge.

"Making the future of sustainable food culture and agriculture — food education sommelier marcie Lakagu" will be held

at the Lakagu commercial complex in Tokyo's Shinjuku Ward on May 11 and 12. The event is organized by the Japan Co-operative Alliance to raise awareness of women's activities to pass on sustainable food culture and agriculture methods to future generations. Produce from female farmers and locally produced fresh and processed foods will be sold there.

"Training for leaders to promote gender equality in localities" will be held at the National Women's Education Center, in Ranzan, Saitama Prefecture, from May 22 to 24. The event is organized by the National Women's Education Center and will be an opportunity to rethink the basic principles of gender equality and deepen understanding of the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals.

Gender diversity, inclusivity vital for growth

Philip Morris Japan Ltd. (PMJ) has extensively recruited female talent to achieve greater diversity in its workforce. In 2018, 40 percent of total new hires were women, which is 2.5 times more than figures from five years ago. The increase was even more dramatic in the field sales force, where the new hire percentage of women rose from 3 percent to 44 percent in five years.

PMJ offers various opportunities for female candidates to meet women already working in the company to learn about their stories and achievements, including the fact that the ratio of women in senior leadership positions has also seen a sharp rise. It stood at 36 percent in 2018, more than double from more than half a decade ago.

PMJ's Manager of Transformation and Organization Effectiveness Mathilda Lumbantobing pointed out that it is easy to voice the importance of closing the gender talent gap, but it's difficult to make it happen if nobody in the organization knows exactly where they are. "We've set clear targets that leaders are accountable for achieving, to improve the representation of women at all levels in the organization, and we're tracking and regularly reporting on the progress," she said.

She also mentioned that President Shea Lih Goh, is a female leader who is a strong role model. "She is actually the first woman to lead PMJ," she said.

As proof that the company is truly committed to creating a gender-balanced,



Philip Morris Japan Ltd.'s Manager of Transformation and Organization Effectiveness Mathilda Lumbantobing speaks during a recent interview with The Japan Times in Tokyo. YOSHIAKI MIURA

inclusive workplace, PMJ has received certification from the Switzerland-based nonprofit EQUAL-SALARY Foundation for three consecutive years since 2016 when it was certified as the first Japan-based company. "We managed to close the pay gap between men and women to 0.4 percent in 2018," she said.

Lumbantobing said realizing a diverse and inclusive environment is crucial for the company known for its innovative heat-not-burn IQOS product that has been widely marketed in Japan since 2014.

Although the pace of change varies in each country, the world is undoubtedly shifting toward a smoke-free future. The

heat-not-burn product has evolved the tobacco product landscape on a global scale. "PMJ's vision to achieve a smoke-free future has been the driver for the transformation of our organization and people," said Lumbantobing.

Different skills, perspectives and ideas from a diverse group of talent were needed to develop and sell the new product. Additionally, various views were crucial in understanding the needs of the different consumers of the product.

To achieve a greater diversity, PMJ also offers a flexible work environment for not only their female employees, but for all of its employees to allow everyone to ben-

efit from and maintain a better balance between personal time and work. "We have introduced flexible working hours for our field sales team where they have the freedom to fully manage their work hours, (as well as) half-day Fridays and work-from-home policies for our head-quarter employees," said Lumbantobing. All employees are also given 10 additional days of annual family leave.

For female employees, a monetary child care support program is offered to ease the economic burden of child-rearing expenses, including the cost of day care centers. "We also try our best in helping them integrate back into their workplaces," she said. As a result of these efforts, all female employees who took maternity leave have returned to work.

As a mother of two children aged 7 and 11, Lumbantobing is fully aware how important it is for the company to allow flexibility in work styles.

The company offers networking opportunities for female sales staff to provide them with peer support across offices in Japan. They get together from different locations to share challenges and find solutions through interacting with other women in the same position. "It has become a regular event where various development activities are also offered during the session," said Lumbantobing.

"In our sales force, women are not the majority yet, so it is important to make sure that they do not feel left out by helping them to speak their opinions, as well



PMJ has committed to creating a gender-balanced, inclusive workplace. PHILIP MORRIS JAPAN LTD.

as concerns," said PMJ's Manager of Communications Ran Koike. Lumbantobing added, "To each such event, some of the managers and male employees are also invited because they need to understand the situation so they can also provide support."

This year, even though closing gender gap will remain the target, Lumbantobing said PMJ will focus more on building an inclusive culture in the workplace. "Diversity is about having a different mix of people. Being inclusive means how to have this mix of different people work together

well," she said. "Developing diversity and inclusion involves leadership to give and receive feedback, making sure all voices are heard, how to eliminate hierarchy while establishing psychological safety to speak out, and making people aware of possible bias in assessing others."

PMJ's business continues to transform around its innovative heat-not-burn product, which was developed in light of the changing societal expectations, and its efforts around inclusion and diversity continue to be the key driver to support its transformation journey.

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P R E S E N T S

Data on how we think we live,
and how we actually do.

