

106th International Labor Conference
Address by Mr. Hiroshi Tokumaru

June 13th, 2017

Thank you Mr. Chairman. It is my great honor being able to speak at this House as an Employer Representative of Japan.

I would like to start by touching upon Japanese Employers' view on recent international economic and labor situation.

According to the World Bank, estimated average GDP growth of the world would be 2.7% in 2017¹. Growth in emerging markets and developing countries is expected to edge up, however, weak investment and productivity growth are weighing on mid-term prospects across many countries. In order to support the world economy and make its growth sustainable, we must invest in new areas and enhance productivity by driving innovation across industries. To this end, facilitating the exchange of highly skilled human resources throughout the world would be the key.

In addition, international movement of trained workers in the field of socio-economic infrastructures, trainees, nurses, and caregivers should be facilitated with a view to complementing labor shortages in countries facing population decrease and aging society including Japan.

Fruitful outcome of the discussion on "Labour Migration" at this Conference is highly anticipated so as to address these issues related to human resource exchanges.

Mr. Chairman, let me now turn to the domestic aspects of labor and the efforts towards addressing them.

Last year, at this House, I have mentioned that in order to enhance Japan's competitiveness, women's active participation in the workforce is indispensable. In other words, Japanese businesses and the economy as a whole have reached the stage where sustained growth hinges on promoting diversity across gender.

¹ Global Economic Prospects, World Bank (January 2017)

Based on the view that advancing women's career development is the key to promoting diversity, Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) has been making steady contributions in this field. For example, as one of many efforts, Keidanren has published a collection of case studies last October showcasing the most innovative practices in this area². We are confident that such efforts as this collection of best practices will lead to further initiatives by companies to tap the "hidden gems" in their workplaces and expand Japan's potential.

As for the promotion of Decent Work, in Japan, so called "Work Style Reform" is now under way. This "Work Style Reform" is regarded as one of the top priorities of Prime Minister Abe's Administration, and he himself is emphasizing its importance in various occasions.

In course of the Reform, the tripartite of Japan has agreed to introduce a ceiling on the overtime working hours with a view to promoting flexible working hours while contributing to raise productivity. Also, under the strong leadership of CEOs, Keidanren is urging the member companies to do away with excessive working hours.

On the issue of "equal pay for equal work", the tripartite of Japan has also agreed to make necessary amendments to related legislations. It is hoped that the companies undertake self-checks on their own practices to determine whether there are unreasonable differences in the treatment between regular and non-regular workers, and make every effort to mitigate such unreasonable differences.

Last but not least, may I refer to the "Future of Work", the main agenda at this House. Last month, on the occasion of Director General Guy Ryder's visit to Japan, extensive discussion was held as to how technical innovation could affect demographic changes and employment situations. I would like to express that this important issue is now attracting interest of many participants among tripartite and academia in Japan.

² The most innovative women's practice, "The hidden gems in your place" (<http://www.keidanren.or.jp/policy/woman/gems2016.pdf>)

Finally, I would like to close my speech by emphasizing once again that employers of Japan are committed towards building a sustainable society through tripartite collaboration, addressing both international and domestic aspects of labor.

Thank you.

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