



## Event Factsheet

# ▶ METI-ILO Forum EXPO 2025 Theme Week For a Brighter Future of Responsible Value Chains

Friday, September 5 2025 | Tokyo, Japan | Hybrid Event (Combining Virtual and In-Person Participation)

## ▶ METI-ILO Forum EXPO 2025 Theme Week For a Brighter Future of Responsible Value Chains

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan (METI) hosted this event as part of the project “[Fostering an Enabling Environment for MSMEs to Promote Responsible Value Chains](#)”. They shared strategies and initiatives for implementing responsible business conduct from a global perspective, with the aim of creating a society that promotes respect for human rights and decent work. A wide range of participants from Japan and overseas—including government officials, enterprises, trade unions and civil society—gathered, making this an event with more than 200 attendees both on-site and online. Furthermore, the Osaka-Kansai EXPO “Peace and Human Rights Week” raised the question “What do we do to eliminate all forms of discrimination and create a society where we respect each other?”. This event served as an opportunity to communicate the importance of business and human rights initiatives as one answer to that question.



### Objectives

This event focused on human rights due diligence for decent work, strengthening the resilience of value chains based on respect for human rights and addressing structural issues—all key aspects of responsible business conduct. It aimed to promote enterprises and other stakeholders to introduce and implement these practices by sharing case studies of practical strategies and initiatives from leading global companies.

It also served as an opportunity to send a message to the international society about the efforts being made at the EXPO to respect human rights, including the implementation of human rights due diligence—a first for an EXPO.

### Video Presentation

A [video](#) introducing efforts by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to uphold human rights in the workplace in accordance with international standards was presented. It showcased examples of enterprises that have fostered a corporate culture which has a positive impact on productivity, staff development and stable industrial relations through continuous employer-employee dialogue on themes such as occupational health and safety—one of the core labour standards.

### Executive Presentations and Panel Discussion

Three top leaders from enterprises implementing advanced initiatives took to the stage to introduce their respective strategies and practices. Taking into account the characteristics of various industries and regions, they shared the challenges of incorporating respect for human rights into supply chain management and discussed ways to further promote business and human rights initiatives, as well as future prospects.

### Presentation by the Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition

Specific examples of initiatives and the challenges involved in promoting respect for human rights and decent work at the EXPO were presented.

## ▶ Opening remarks and executive presentations



**Hideaki Fujisawa,**  
Director-General, International Economic Affairs  
Department/Deputy Director-General for Business  
and Human Rights Policy, International Economic  
Affairs Department, Trade Policy Bureau, METI

At the outset, Mr Hideaki Fujisawa, Director-General, International Economic Affairs Department/Deputy Director-General for Business and Human Rights Policy, International Economic Affairs Department, Trade Policy Bureau, METI noted that respect for human rights by businesses leads to building trust across society and achieving a sustainable future. He highlighted that the Japanese government is supporting voluntary corporate action through guidelines published in 2022 and emphasised the importance of engaging all stakeholders, including SMEs, and of undertaking long-term initiatives underpinned by management commitment.



**Petra Färe,**  
President/CEO & CSO, IKEA Japan K.K.

Ms Petra Färe, CEO&CSO of IKEA Japan took to the stage and explained how based on IKEA's vision "to create a better everyday life for the many people", the company fosters an accessible and inclusive corporate culture that gives possibilities for all staff to grow. She also highlighted the introduction of the supplier code of conduct, "IWAY", emphasising the company's efforts to protect people and the environment throughout the entire value chain including workplace safety, fair working conditions and animal welfare. She further stressed the company's commitment to achieving equal pay for equal work and promoting diversity and inclusion.



**Sayaka Matsui,**  
General Counsel, Representative Executive  
Officer, Unilever Japan Holdings G.K.

Ms Sayaka Matsui, General Counsel, Representative Executive Officer of Unilever Japan Holdings presented on how "improving living standards"—which includes the guarantee of a living wage and support for small-scale farmers and SMEs—is a key pillar of the company's sustainability strategy. She highlighted that this is underpinned by a thorough commitment to the value of "business integrity". She also shared that the company is collaborating with all partner companies across the supply chain. For example, by introducing a "menu pricing" system designed to address sustainability in logistics, the company is working on sustainable business design, including reducing the number of trucks and emissions, as well as shortening drivers' working hours.



**Yukihiro Nitta,**  
Group Executive Officer, Sustainability,  
FAST RETAILING CO., LTD.

Mr Yukihiro Nitta, Group Executive Officer, Sustainability, of Fast Retailing took to the stage to outline the company's framework which prioritises objectivity and transparency in its global operations. This includes third-party audits, direct dialogue with workers through hotlines and the disclosure of a full list of factories. Furthermore, he highlighted the importance of addressing and improving structural challenges in each country. This includes risk identification and improvement in collaboration with external specialist organisations, monitoring through dialogue with suppliers' workers, as well as initiatives such as engaging with the industry following the Rana Plaza disaster, addressing long working hours in China and advocating for social security systems in Indonesia. At the same time, he delivered a powerful message that there is no future without balancing business growth with sustainability.

## ► Panel discussion and presentation of initiatives at the EXPO



During the panel discussion, the leaders of the three companies that had delivered executive presentations exchanged frank views on the practice of respecting human rights within their supply chains and the challenges involved, taking into account the specific characteristics of their respective industries and regions of operation. Firstly, as expectations for human rights due diligence from companies increase, a shared understanding was expressed that **“respect for human rights is fundamental to corporate activities and is directly linked to trust, brand value and business sustainability”**.

They also shared specific examples. One case highlighted the difficulty of restoring trust following past criticism of working conditions from an NGO and the acute realisation of the need to embed respect for human rights into corporate activities. Another example described how, despite facing harsh criticism from investors regarding its sustainability strategy, the company consistently updated its strategy in response to changes in society and on the ground and by embedding this as part of its corporate culture, it has built its current reputation and trust. Furthermore, an example was shared of a company demonstrating its corporate value of caring for people and the planet through a commitment to ensuring equal treatment regardless of gender or employment status.

A common theme regarding the attitude required of future leaders was the importance of **“placing people at the centre”** and **“continuing to clearly communicate, both internally and externally, that respect for human rights is the cornerstone of the business”**. There was a shared recognition that when leaders themselves embody these values and consistently convey a unified message to employees, suppliers and society, the company’s responsible stance becomes deeply ingrained, ultimately contributing to the realisation of a sustainable society.



Mr Yasushi Nagami, Director-General, Sustainability Bureau, Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition outlined the

initiatives being undertaken to ensure respect for human rights and the realisation of decent work at the EXPO. He explained how the Association, as the organiser of a major international event, is promoting the formulation of human rights policies and guidelines for a sustainable EXPO, the implementation of human rights due diligence, the identification and prevention of human rights risks and the establishment of a reporting system. Whilst acknowledging the challenge that “there is no single correct answer” to these efforts, he emphasised the importance of listening to the voices of stakeholders and striving for continuous improvement. He further highlighted the importance of the EXPO leaving a positive impact on society as a “legacy” and expressed the intention to continue raising public awareness and interest in human rights through various best practices and new initiatives.



During the interactive session involving participants, real-time feedback was shared using web-based tools, with the aim of encouraging attendees to view human rights issues as matters of personal concern. Participants voiced candid comments such as “I can’t keep up with the issues” and “I can’t see an end to this”, highlighting the challenges of initiatives to promote respect for human rights. However, this also served to reaffirm the importance of maintaining a commitment to ongoing dialogue and action both within and outside the company.

Furthermore, drawing on insights gained from the speakers’ reports and corporate case studies, participants shared specific actions they could take within the next month, such as in-house training, dialogue with business partners and site visits. The fact that corporate leaders spoke personally about the challenges and lessons learnt carried great weight and resonated deeply with the participants, providing an opportunity for each individual to re-evaluate their own position and role.