

Remarks by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan
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G20 Labour and Employment Ministerial Meeting
Session1 “Generate Adequate Job Opportunities”

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Thank you chair, it is a great honour for me to have this opportunity to make remarks on behalf of the Government of Japan. I appreciate the strong leadership shown by Mr. Yin Weimin, the Minister for Human Resources and Social Security of the Government of People’s Republic of China, in the discussion of this G20 Labour and Employment Ministerial Meeting.

The Chinese government has set “Innovation and Inclusive Growth” as the theme of this Meeting. To achieve this objective, it is necessary to accomplish a sustainable social and economic system where people can live with fair satisfaction by achieving strong economic growth and redistributing its fruits through realizing a virtuous cycle of growth and redistribution.

After World War II, Japan achieved economic growth that brought us improved living standards and lifted the people out of poverty. However, we are now facing demographic challenges such as “declining population”, “declining labour force”, “aging population” and “low birth rates”.

In order to achieve a virtuous cycle of growth and redistribution in spite of the demographic challenges, the structural reform of the economy and labour market is indispensable. It is important to create employment opportunities through two structural reforms, namely, the drastic industrial structural reform and the labour market reform, in addition to the corporate governance reform and the other reforms which strongly accelerate innovation.

We will encourage private sectors to reform their industrial structure for higher productivity and added-value. Facilitating business restructuring, encouraging entrepreneurship and improvement of productivity through technological breakthroughs will result in increasing metabolism in industrial activities. This will activate the economy and create more job opportunities. In order to encourage private sectors to achieve such a high-impact business metabolism, the government has been actively proceeding with regulatory reforms by

formulating Corporate Governance Code, utilizing National Strategic Special Zones, and enhance and strengthen the framework to smoothly provide growth capital and risk money such as promoting utilization of various types of crowdfunding.

In addition, we will help to create quality jobs by supporting a wider range of working styles and promote further participation in the labour market by carrying out the labour market structural reform. This will include “women’s active participation”, “the elderly’s active participation”, “equal pay for equal work” and “tackle against the practice of long working hours to improve productivity”.

The Abe Cabinet places the highest priority on facilitating women’s participation in the society. The “Law on Promotion of Women’s Participation and Advancement in the Workplace” obligates employers to establish numerical targets for women’s participation and to disclose their action plans for achieving those targets. This will facilitate women’s participation in the workplace by accelerating employers’ efforts.

Then, in order to further promote active participation of elderly people, we will introduce supportive measures for re-employment of elderly employees through requiring enterprises to secure employment for employees who wish to continue to stay until the age of 65 and expanding the scope of those eligible for employment insurance to workers of 65 years old and over.

Furthermore, in accordance with the fact that more than half of non-standard workers, including part-time workers, are women and about a quarter are the elderly, we will develop a society where these workers’ performance is evaluated appropriately based on the idea of “equal pay for equal work”.

The Japanese government will continue to tackle against the practice of long working hours to improve productivity. In order to curb long working hours, we submitted the amendment bill of the labour standards law to the National Diet in April last year. However, the bill has not been discussed in the Diet so far. We will make every effort to ensure the early passing of the amendment bill in the Diet. Also, we have strengthened the labour inspection of long working hours since this April.

In addition, we will discuss a policy making system to reflect more diverse ways of working. Furthermore, we are discussing “The Japan Vision: Future of Work 2035” that envisions a future way of working in 20 years based on new technological innovations and the accompanying possibilities for social structural change. We aim to build a society where more flexible and more diverse ways of working are widely accepted.

Japan will continue to share our experiences with the world in overcoming a large number of policy challenges. We are also committed to strengthen the technical cooperation we have already been carrying out for many years.

Finally, I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing our determination to realize the sustainable society where people can live with fair satisfaction all over the world through strengthening such cooperation.

Thank you.