

Panel Discussion at CSW54 NGO Parallel Events
Empowerment of Women:
Best Practices and New Challenges in Japan and the Republic of Korea

14:00 – 15:30, 1st March (Mon), 2010

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In Asia, many countries have concerns about high levels of population growth, whereas other countries are facing declining birth rates. Both situations have an impact on women's lives and society as a whole. This presentation reports on the current state and background of low birth rates and the innovative measures taken to support child rearing in Japan. It is hoped that some lessons can be learnt from sharing our challenges and experiences in countering this problem.

1. Change in birth rates in Japan
 - Decline in Total Fertility Rate from 2.00 in 1960 to 1.37 in 2008
 - Decreasing trend in population since 2005
2. Reasons for low birth rates in Japan
 - Fewer marriages and fewer children born
 - Women experiencing difficulties in continuing their careers after marriage and giving birth
 - High costs associated with raising children
3. Governmental policies and measures to increase the number of children
 - New appointment of a Minister in 2003 to address the declining birth rate
 - Formulation of policies and implementation of projects to encourage people to have more children
4. Results of survey on support for child rearing in Kitakyushu City
 - Survey conducted by KFAW to help the City of Kitakyushu introduce incentive measures to the private sector in 2008
 - High level of awareness that both work and child rearing are important
 - Difficulty in taking advantage of paternity/maternity leave due to limited manpower
5. Learning from innovative measures on support for child rearing
 - Providing advantages in public bidding and loans
 - Nursery schools within company's premises
 - Awareness-raising campaigns and training
 - Awards