



**Asian Productivity Organization (APO)**  
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[www.apo-tokyo.org](http://www.apo-tokyo.org)

## Press Release

30 January 2018

### **APO forum to discuss women's role in national productivity growth**

*Funded by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the forum will deliberate on how governments can promote female participation in productive economic activities.*

The Asian Productivity Organization (APO) will host the Forum on Women's Labor Force Participation and Productivity Enhancement in Tokyo, 5–7 February 2018, to deliberate on government policies and best practices for promoting female labor force participation (FLFP) in productive economic activities in member countries. The project is funded by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to examine how to eliminate gender disparities and unconscious bias while promoting gender equality in the workplace.

The forum will be attended by 23 international participants from 14 APO member countries, who will discuss the role of the public and private sectors in implementing government policies to promote FLFP. It will also describe the role of business federations in Japan in encouraging FLFP among private-sector enterprises. Speakers from Australia, Japan, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka will give presentations and lead discussions.

Enhancing FLFP for productivity growth is a critical component of the UN Sustainable Development Goals that countries have committed to achieving by 2030. It was also an important agenda item under the 07 Ise-Shima Leaders' Declaration in 2016, stemming from the fact that the rate of untapped productive potential of women is almost double the rate for men.

Extensive research by the UN and other global agencies clearly indicates that the underutilized or unutilized potential of women adversely impacts national competitiveness, with repercussions on future economic growth and stability. In some Asian countries where the aging population coupled with declining birth rates poses grim prospects for labor shortages, the need to bring women into the labor force is greater than ever. In addition, prevailing cultural and policy biases against equal work opportunities for women may prevent them from finding gainful employment.

The APO has long endeavored to promote the participation of women in the labor force by sensitizing policymakers, government officials, and industry leaders to the importance of adopting more inclusive policies and programs to unleash the potential of women and enable them to contribute in various capacities to society. The three-day Forum on Women's Labor Force Participation and Productivity Enhancement is part of APO initiatives with a common agenda of strengthening women's participation in the formal labor force for the overall development of member economies.

**Note to Editors:** Please refer to the agenda sheet for detail of the program sessions and speakers.

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**About the APO**

The Asian Productivity Organization (APO) is the sole nonprofit international organization in the Asia-Pacific devoted to productivity enhancement. Established in 1961 as a regional intergovernmental organization, the APO contributes to the sustainable socioeconomic development of the Asia-Pacific through productivity enhancement. The current membership comprises 20 economies. Three strategic directions guide the APO: strengthen NPOs and promote the development of SMEs and communities; catalyze innovation-led productivity growth; and promote Green Productivity. The main activities of the APO are capacity building of institutions and human resources development.

**PROGRAM SCHEDULE**  
**FORUM ON WOMEN'S LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND PRODUCTIVITY  
 ENHANCEMENT**  
**Tokyo, 5–7 February 2018**

A three-day forum in Tokyo, funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, is being organized to share government policies and best practices to promote female labor force participation (FLFP) in productive economic activities, eliminate gender disparities and unconscious bias, and promote gender equality in the workplace; discuss the roles of the public and private sectors in implementing government policies to promote FLFP; and showcase the role of business federations in Japan in encouraging FLFP among private-sector enterprises.

*As of 30 January 2018*

<b>Venue</b> <b>Hotel:</b> Hotel Asia Center of Japan <b>Address:</b> 8-10-32 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0052 <b>Tel:</b> 03-3402-6111 <b>Fax :</b> 03-3402-0738 <b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.asiacenter.or.jp">http://www.asiacenter.or.jp</a>
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Time	Agenda	Presenter/Facilitator
<b>DAY 1 , MONDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 2018</b>		
09.10–09.30	Registration	APO Secretariat
09.30–10.15	<b>Opening Session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Welcome Remarks by <b>APO Secretary General Dr. Santhi Kanoktanaporn</b></i></li> <li>▪ <i>Introduction of resource speakers and participants</i></li> <li>▪ <i>APO Introduction</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Group photo</i></li> </ul>	
10.15–10.30	Coffee break	

**Session 1. Empowerment of Women and Gender Equality in the Workplace for Productivity Enhancement and SDG Achievement**

**Background:** *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 and 8 focus on achieving women's full effective participation, providing equal opportunities for women's leadership at all levels of decision making in all aspects of life, as well as full productive employment and decent work for all women by 2030. The session will shed light on the efforts of governments in the Asia-Pacific to mainstream women's agendas, achieve the SDGs, and enhance productivity.*

<b>10.30–11.15</b>	<b>Womenomics—Japanese Government Policies for Female Labor Force Participation</b>  <i>The gender gap and Japanese government’s approach to boosting the FLFP rate to achieve 2020 targets and 2030 SDGs will be summarized. An overview of the importance of boosting the FLFP rate to national productivity performance and economic growth will also be provided.</i>	<b>Dr. Hiroyuki Fujimura</b>  <i>Professor, Business School of Innovation Management Hosei University</i>
<b>11.15–12.00</b>	<b>Empowerment of women and gender equality in the workplace: Trends and Challenges in the Asia Pacific</b>  <i>The status and challenges of women’s empowerment as well as opportunities for women in management and leadership positions in the Asia-Pacific will be presented in connection with the goals of the UN for women’s empowerment and their impact on productivity.</i>	<b>Ms. J.M. Thilaka Jayasundara</b>  <i>Additional Secretary Ministry of Finance and Mass Media, Sri Lanka</i>
<b>12.00–14.00</b>	<b>Welcome lunch for delegates hosted by the APO</b> <i>Venue: Meeting Room C, Hotel Asia Center of Japan</i>	
<b>14.00–14.45</b>	<b>Women’s Empowerment for the achievement of SDGs – Opportunities and Challenges</b>  <i>Under SDGs 5 and 8, achieving women’s full effective participation, providing equal opportunities for women’s leadership at all levels of decision making in all aspects of life, as well as full productive employment and decent work for all women by 2030 are the focus. Opportunities and challenges ahead will be presented with reference to the Global Gender Equality Report.</i>	<b>Dr. Ronahlee Asuncion</b>  <i>Dean, School of Labor and Industrial Relations (SOLAIR), University of the Philippines Diliman</i>
<b>14.45–15.30</b>	<b>Enhancing Female Labor Force Participation for Productivity Growth: Challenges Ahead</b>  <i>Gender gaps in the Asia-Pacific labor market are described. The long-term endeavors of the APO to boost the participation of women in the labor force as one measure to tackle the impact of demographic changes and the findings of APO research on FLFP will be presented.</i>	<b>Ms. Huong Thu Ngo</b>  <i>Program Officer Research and Planning Department, APO</i>
<b>15.30–15.45</b>	<b>Coffee break</b>	
<b>15.45–16.30</b>	<b>Women’s Participation in the Labor Force for the Achievement of SDGs and Productivity Enhancement</b>  <i>Why are there so few women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) career? Drawing on evidence-based research, this session will discuss major triggers for and barriers to women in STEM and how we can overcome those factors.</i>	<b>Dr. Sukanlaya Sawang</b>  <i>Associate Professor, Small Business Innovation and Wellbeing, Queensland University of Technology</i>
<b>16.30–17.10</b>	<b>Participant presentations</b>	

17.10–17.20	<b>Wrap-up of Day 1</b>	
<b>DAY 2, TUESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2018</b>		
<b>Session 2. Best Practices to Promote (FLFP) in Productive Economic Activities</b>		
<p><b>Background:</b> <i>The question of how to unleash the power of women to achieve diverse, inclusive societies is the top agenda item of many governments in order to achieve the SDGs. Methods must involve empowering and encouraging women's participation in all aspects of socioeconomic affairs, enhancing knowledge of the roles of the public and private sectors in promoting gender equality in the workplace, and observing successful industries and businesses initiated and managed by women. The session will highlight best practices of government policies and the active roles of public–private partnerships and of associations/federations in increasing the participation of women in productive economic activities in the Asia-Pacific.</i></p>		
09.30–10.20	<p><b>FLFP Policies for Productivity Enhancement: Experience from Sri Lanka</b></p> <p><i>The approach of the Government of Sri Lanka to promoting the role of women in leadership positions and in the labor force as a whole will be described in detail.</i></p>	<p><b>Ms. J.M. Thilaka Jayasundara</b></p> <p><i>Additional Secretary Ministry of Finance and Mass Media, Sri Lanka</i></p>
10.20–11.10	<p><b>Australian Government Policies and the Role of Public–Private Partnerships in Driving Productive Participation of Women in the Labor Force</b></p> <p><i>The presentation will showcase innovative schemes of the Australian government and private agencies in order to promote women in STEM.</i></p>	<p><b>Dr. Sukanlaya Sawang</b></p> <p><i>Associate Professor, Small Business Innovation and Wellbeing, Queensland University of Technology</i></p>
11.10–11.30	<b>Coffee break</b>	
11.30–12.20	<p><b>Empowerment of Women in the Workforce as a Management Goal for Japanese Companies</b></p> <p><i>An overview of women's empowerment in Japan, approach of the Japanese government and companies to encouraging female participation in the workforce, and challenges ahead for Japan.</i></p>	<p><b>Dr. Hiroyuki Fujimura</b></p> <p><i>Professor, Business School of Innovation Management Hosei University</i></p>
12.20–13.45	<b>Lunch break</b>	
14.00–14.50	<p><b>Womenomics for Society 5.0</b></p> <p><i>Japan is now demonstrating unprecedented enthusiasm for “womenomics” and companies regard the active participation of women in the workforce as a strategic imperative. Keidanren's publication on the most innovative practices in promoting gender equality among Japanese companies will be presented.</i></p>	<p><b>Ms. Mizue Oyama</b></p> <p><i>Manager, Political &amp; Social Affairs Bureau Japan Business Federation (KEIDANREN)</i></p>
14.50–15.40	<p><b>Best Practices in Policies on FLFP in Productive Economic Activities</b></p> <p><i>In 2015, the APO conducted research on the participation of female labor in the workforce and government policies across member countries to enhance the participation of women. The research findings will be presented, highlighting the best practices in participating member countries.</i></p>	<p><b>Dr. Ronahlee Asuncion</b></p> <p><i>Dean, School of Labor and Industrial Relations (SOLAIR), University of the Philippines Diliman</i></p>

15.40–16.00	Coffee break	
16.00–17.00	Participants' presentations	
17.00–17.15	Wrap-up of Day 2	
<b>DAY 3, WEDNESDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2018</b>		
<b>Session 3. Efforts to Achieve Productive Participation of Women in Enterprises</b>		
<p><b>Background:</b> <i>Background: Creating a diverse, inclusive workplace environment in which women can exercise their abilities and play active roles requires the strong commitment of top corporate executives. Best practices from companies successful in encouraging women to play active roles, work in line with their aptitude and wishes, and energize business will be showcased in this session.</i></p>		
09.30–10.10	<p><b>Advancing Women's Career Development through Diversity and Inclusion Strategy—Case of All Nippon Airways</b>  <i>Best practice in apply IT to overcome time and place-related restrictions. More than half of ANA are women. ANA was recognized in the list of Nadeshiko Brand companies for promoting women in the workplace in 2017. In 2016 ANA was awarded the 2016 Leader Award in the J-Win Diversity Awards, was granted the Nadeshiko Brand designation, and selected for the New Diversity Management Selection 100 list in fiscal 2015.</i></p>	<p><b>Ms. Ayako Ebara</b>  <i>Director Central Executive Committee, All Nippon Airways Workers Union</i></p>
10.10–10.50	<p><b>Promoting Gender Equality through Support Measures for Women's Activities—Best practice of SHISEIDO</b>  <i>Shiseido actively promotes gender equality as part of the management strategies. Shiseido was selected "The First-Place of Overall Ranking" for three straight years since the year 2014 in "100 Best Companies Where Women Play Active Part" organized by "Nikkei Woman" and "Nikkei Womenomics Project". The ratio of female leaders has reached 30.0% as of January of 2017 in Shiseido.</i>  <a href="https://www.shiseidogroup.com/sustainability/labor/diversity.html">https://www.shiseidogroup.com/sustainability/labor/diversity.html</a></p>	
10.50–11.05	Coffee break	
11.05–11.45	<p><b>Advancing Women's Career Development and Promoting Gender Equality in Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Company</b></p>	<p><b>Mr. Yuya Araki</b>  <i>Manager, Planning Section Human Resources Department, Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Co., Ltd.</i></p>
11.45–12.30	Discussion and Forum Outcome Document	
12.30–13.30	Lunch break	
13.45–15.00	Finalization of Outcome Document	
15.00–16.00	<p><b>Closing Session</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation and feedback</li> <li>• Vote of thanks by participants' representative</li> <li>• Certificates distributed to participants</li> <li>• Closing remarks by the APO Secretariat</li> </ul>	