



“Japanese Companies Increasingly Embrace Action on the SDGs, Including a Focus on Gender Equality”

Official launch of a new report

“Mainstreaming the SDGs in Business: Actions by Companies and Organisations in Japan”

Over the past three years, Global Compact Network Japan (GCNJ) and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) have jointly investigated the awareness and efforts of GCNJ member companies and organisations on the SDGs, and have published reports summarising the results. The latest report, “Mainstreaming the SDGs in Business: Actions by Companies and Organisations in Japan”, includes the results of the 2018 survey as well as a survey specifically focused on diversity management, which is closely linked to SDG5 (gender equality and women's empowerment), SDG8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG10 (reduced inequalities). The survey on diversity management was conducted with the cooperation of the WE EMPOWER programme, which is supported by the European Union, UN Women and the ILO. The appendices of the report contain a number of interviews with CEOs and executives talking about SDGs.

As for the trends on SDGs awareness and efforts, the results of the 2018 survey showed that GCNJ members have been making progress in integrating the SDGs into their core business. For example, the level of recognition of the SDGs among top management rose 23 percentage points (from 36% to 59%) in just one year. The level of progress on the five steps of the SDG Compass showed that Step 1, “Understanding the SDGs”, decreased from 54% in 2016 to 31% in 2018, which can be interpreted as an indication that many GCNJ members have entered the implementation phase.

With regard to hot topics related to the SDGs, diversity management and women's advancement¹ were addressed by most GCNJ members. This was followed by CSR procurement and SDGs reporting.

A key challenge in promoting diversity management in Japan is the promotion of gender equality. Efforts to promote gender equality by surveyed companies were mainly conducted in the workplace, and were mostly supported by the country's legal system and corporate compliance. On the other hand, challenges were still evident in the operation of internal systems (parental leave taken by fathers, etc.), awareness of unconscious bias, and efforts beyond the workplace such as in markets and communities where companies operate.

Front runner companies have positioned “women's advancement” as “part of the promotion of diversity for innovation”, and promoted diversity management through work-style reforms not only for women, but also for men. In addition, such companies have been making efforts to take the strengths of diverse human resources, such as foreign nationals and people with disabilities, and link them to innovation.

¹ In Japan, the term “women's advancement” is used in a broad sense, such as “women's empowerment” and “efforts to promote gender equality in companies”.



This report was presented at the side event of High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2019 (HLPF 2019), which is dedicated to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in New York in July.

https://www.iges.or.jp/files/hlpf/pdf/20190717_Agenda.pdf

We will hold a session on diversity management, which was one of the main themes of this report, at the International Forum for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific "ISAP 2019" hosted by IGES on 30 July. <https://isap.iges.or.jp/2019/en/day1/tt2.html>

The report is available at:

GCNJ: <http://www.ungcjin.org/activities/topics/detail.php?id=311>

IGES: https://pub.iges.or.jp/pub/en_Mainstreaming_the_SDGs_in_Business

About Global Compact Network Japan (GCNJ)

United Nations Global Compact is a voluntary initiative based on CEO commitments to implement universal sustainability principles in line with ten principles of human rights, labor, environment and corruption prevention. With an emphasis on collaboration and innovation, it takes strategic actions to advance broader societal goals, such as the SDGs. UN Global Compact seeks to support sustainable growth by corporations and groups demonstrating responsible and creative leadership. Global Compact Network Japan (GCNJ) was launched as a local network of UN Global Compact in Japan in December 2003. Its mission is to promote UN Global Compact activities in Japan with a view to realise a more sustainable world by serving as a platform for learning, collaboration, communication among corporations and organisations sharing this vision. <http://www.ungcjin.org/sdgs/index.html>

About Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)

The Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) is a collaborative research and outreach organisation working to accelerate the transition to a sustainable, resilient, shared, and inclusive Asia-Pacific region, both across borders and within the world at large. Our strategic research and operations are defined by a mission-- to drive action on the world's most critical environmental and social challenges through the delivery of trusted expertise on sustainable development and resilience. IGES operates as an agent of change. Together with key international organisations, governments, academic institutes, business and civil society leaders we seek to foster a world where planetary boundaries are fully respected, a green economy is flexibly implemented, and the well-being of people is steadily improved. In so doing we emphasise workable and inspired approaches to cross-cutting global development issues ranging from



climate change, natural resources and ecosystems management, and sustainable consumption and production, among many others. The Institute— established in 1998 with support from the Japanese government and Kanagawa Prefecture— maintains its international headquarters in Hayama, Japan. With offices and local centres in Tokyo, Kansai, Kitakyushu, Beijing, Bangkok, and New Delhi, IGES supports a regional and global network for ground breaking sustainable development research and practice.

<https://www.iges.or.jp/en/>

For more information on GCNJ and IGES:

GCNJ: <http://www.ungcjin.org/sdgs/index.html> (Japanese only)

IGES: <https://www.iges.or.jp/en/press/20190725.html>

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