

**Topic: Future of Work (Employment)**  
**Committee: Work and Life Balance**  
**Country: Japan**

The World Economic Forum released a report this year stating that a significant amount of upskilling and reskilling of workers are necessary on preparing the workforce on the coming Fourth Industrial Revolution as technological breakthroughs rapidly shift the frontier between human work tasks and those performed by machines and algorithms. Hence, the global labour market are likely to experience not only disruptions but also major transformations in creating a new business model change in all industries, due to the revolution interacts with socio-economic and demographic factors. An even bigger change is coming when baby-boomers retire and millennials take over. Their growing dominance in the share of the workforce implies that before this current decade is over, almost 50% of employees originate from this cluster of tech-savvy, mobile-centric and socially-networked workers. The borderless dynamic workforce will not only reinvent work, but also the workplace. The digital era will allow us to work anywhere at any time, playing a vital role in our work and life balance but also affect how we interact with one another. The future of work brings forth its flexibility and independence, but also uncertainty, precariousness and a lack of labour rights.

Japan's demographic traits of an aging population with declining birthrate and technological innovations was discussed in the National Dialogue on the Future of Work, which was held on 12 May last year in Tokyo, organized by the Japan Institute of Labour Policy and Training and the International Labour Organisation, a specialized agency of the United Nations. The Future of Work initiative that was introduced by Mr. Kazuo Sugeno, JILPT President concerns the need to change the socioeconomic system, supported by Mr. Guy Ryder, the Director-General of ILO, it is centralized to explore the effective ways in encouraging social justice, the creation of the world of work which was fair, ethical and accomplished in supplying decent standard of living to people in all professions worldwide. Representatives of workers, owners and experts in the Council for the Realization of Work Style Reform drafted their discussions into an Action Plan, which was also brought up by Mr. Keiichiro Hamaguchi, the Research Director General JILPT in his keynote report, "From Japanese work style flexibility to digital flexibility". The Japanese approach to employment was detailed by flexibility of regular employees in aspect of job description, working period and its geographic with return they were endorsed long-term or lifetime employment. However, those who are non-regular, mostly housewives or students were at risk for unstable employment with meager wages and small benefits. The Work Style reform attempts to part away from the former practices of Japanese work style flexibility towards a more defined work approach, especially in concern of long working hours and curtailing the gap between regular and non-regular workers. The digitalization of the economy and Fourth Industrial Revolution will make possible to suggest new forms of work styles such as telework, working at any location desired, permitting those with care duties to work at virtually any given time.

Since previous initiatives by the government for improving Japan's fertility rate has failed and recent enforcement of reducing excessive over time work was made, it is still a question to how these socio-economic factors will project in the work and life balance in the future of work employment. Japan should initiate a developing progressive policy sustaining to the ethical amount of work durations while companies should realize that the future of work is the response to

acclimate with the necessary changes on their business strategy that harmonizes the needs and aspirations of the people. Technological advancement is hardly considered a threat to Japan and often highlights the societal benefit and usage of their innovation. It is of importance that while preparing and paving way to the uncertainty of future and the fourth industrial revolution that the labour laws are reviewed to reflect the changing times to protect and uphold the employees' rights as there would be major structural changes in organization, benefit and evaluation structures. Japan should seek in securing a legal framework to cover the self-employed or freelancers and those who pursue telework.