

Tokyo Governor Urges Urban Leaders at OECD to Build a Better Future Together

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Tokyo Governor Koike Yuriko has called on fellow local leaders from member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to fight common urban challenges together and build a “better and sustainable future.”

The worsening climate crisis, shrinking and aging populations, technological revolutions driven by artificial intelligence (AI), and geopolitical risks due to conflicts. Ms. Koike cited them as part of the challenges facing the world’s cities when she addressed some 150 global and local leaders, experts and stakeholders at the OECD headquarters in Paris.

“The world is facing great upheaval,” Ms. Koike said in a keynote address on April 14 at a ceremony inaugurating the OECD “Urban Days” initiative. “Dynamic shifts are accelerating this wave of change and cities are at the forefront of so many various social issues.” Over 80 percent of residents in the predominantly rich and market economy-oriented OECD countries are known to live in cities.

Her speech emphasized Tokyo’s “seamless measures” to encourage marriage, childbirth and



7th Meeting of the OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth



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parenting to reverse the declining birthrate, one of the most pressing global urban issues. She also explained the initiatives to provide senior people with jobs and skills in Tokyo where life expectancy is, she said, “unmatched worldwide”—at about 82 for men and 88 for women—and considered “choju” (long living).

The Urban Days framework has been created by the 38-nation intergovernmental OECD for discussions on how to shape and finance “inclusive, circular and sustainable cities.”

In her speech, she called for city-to-city alliances. “Together, we can make a meaningful impact and build a better future for everyone,” she said. “Tokyo is ready to lead the way to a sustainable future, partnering with cities worldwide.”

In the French capital, the Tokyo governor also attended the closed-door 7th meeting of the OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth. The ten-year-old forum brings together some 70 local leaders who have committed to tackling inequalities and promoting more inclusive economic growth in cities. Ms. Koike is on the group’s eight-member steering committee.

On her return home from Paris, the Tokyo governor told Japanese reporters that the current growing uncertainty in the world was worrying urban leaders who attended the OECD events.

“People from countries and cities were talking about this uncertainty, indeed. How to solve this intransparency really matters in the management of each city or capital,” she said. Tokyo will continue “partnering with cities around the world on such common challenges,” she added.

Ms. Koike, a former member of parliament, took office as Tokyo's first female governor in 2016, and is now in her third term. Having served as Japan’s first female defense minister in 2007 and



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Station F, the World's Largest Startup Campus in Paris

headed the environment ministry from 2003-2006, she has a wealth of experience and knowledge in national politics and diplomacy.

Tokyo's challenge to help everyone have children and raise them if they wish

As its "seamless measures" to reverse the declining birthrate, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) has been providing an AI matchmaking system, supporting egg freezing, offering free childcare, granting monthly allowances to children aged 18 or younger, and effectively making high school tuition free.



Station F, the World's Largest Startup Campus in Paris

Ms. Koike told the Urban Days forum citing recent data that marriages in Tokyo have increased year-on-year. "We see this as a positive trend for future births."

The TMG also established a career center last June to help the older find work. Tokyo Metropolitan University has set up a college where people 50 or older, even over 80, study and socialize. "We look forward to serving as a model, showing how people worldwide can remain active and enjoy long, healthy lives," Ms. Koike said.

"SusHi Tech" startup conference to make Tokyo a hub for innovation

At the OECD meetings, she publicized Tokyo's efforts to become a "global node for innovation and economic growth" by supporting entrepreneurs and startups. She called on the audience to attend the annual "SusHi Tech Tokyo 2025", one of Asia's largest startup conferences, which was held for the third time this year.

"SusHi Tech Tokyo" is an abbreviation for "Sustainable High City Tech Tokyo." Koike said, "We will invite global investors and entrepreneurs and offer a number of business development programs."

In between the OECD meetings, the Tokyo governor toured the world's largest startup support center, called Station F, which provides office space for up to 1,000 startups and early-stage businesses in the heart of Paris.

She exchanged views there with three Japanese startups, the European units of HERALBONY, specialized in fashion items created mainly by artists with intellectual impairments; UNITED SILK, which applies domestic silk not only as a fabric but also as a biomaterial in the food, healthcare

and other industries; and Biodata Bank, known for its wearable device that warns of heat stress risks. HERALBONY EUROPE CEO Oshioka Marie, UNITED SILK CEO Kawai Takashi and Biodata Bank CEO Anzai Takeshi attended the meeting.

The sojourn in Paris was her third official overseas trip since re-elected to a third term last July.

She visited Cairo, Abu Dhabi and Baku last November. She spoke upon Tokyo's climate action at the UN COP29 climate conference in the capital of Azerbaijan. In Cairo, she elaborated on Tokyo's sustainable urban development initiatives at the UN Habitat World Urban Forum.

In the Thai capital in February, Ms. Koike and Bangkok Governor Chadchart Sittipunt signed a joint communiqué pledging to cooperate in tackling climate-linked natural disasters, an aging and shrinking population, and other challenges facing their bustling Asian megalopolises.

Boosting women's status to make Tokyo "rich with potential"

Her OECD speech in Paris also focused on Japan's lack of gender equality. Tokyo has launched a fund with 8 billion yen (about 56 million dollars) to invest in startups that develop services to support "women's entrepreneurship and empowerment," said Ms. Koike.

"We aim to transform Tokyo into a city rich with potential. An inclusive place where diverse players can connect, and unicorns can emerge and prosper," she said.

Ms. Koike has been a major player in OECD activities over years. In 2017, she spoke at the OECD Forum on Green Finance and Investment at the OECD headquarters, presenting Tokyo's efforts to become a world leader in financial and environment affairs ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, which was postponed to 2021 by the COVID outbreak.

Last December, she delivered a keynote speech online at an event in Paris commemorating the publication of the "OECD Regions and Cities at a Glance in 2024." Her speech highlighted Tokyo's measures concerning shrinking and aging populations as well as the "Tokyo Resilience Project" that protects the megacity of 14 million residents from increasingly intense and frequent natural disasters.

As Tokyo's renewable energy initiatives, she cited a gigawatt-class floating wind-power farm, the mandatory installation of solar panels on the roofs of new homes and buildings supplied by major builders starting this month, and the Japan-originated technology of producing solar cells only 1-millimeter thick.

Ms. Koike's trip to Paris was her 21st official overseas engagement as the Tokyo governor since 2016. She has previously visited the French capital twice – in 2017 and 2018.

In 2017, in addition to her participation in the 4th meeting of the OECD Forum on Green Finance and Investment, Ms. Koike presented Tokyo's environmental initiatives at a climate action

meeting of nearly 100 mayors of the world's leading cities.

She visited Paris after London in 2018 and signed an agreement with Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo on cooperation in organizing the 2020 Tokyo and 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games.

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