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# Putting Gender on the Agenda at the Olympics

After a sexist gaffe led Yoshiro Mori, then-head of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics organizing committee, to resign, his successor established a gender equality committee. Olympics corporate sponsors are now being asked to set their own equality and inclusion targets.

Author: Michelle Russell



Seiko Hashimoto, Japan's minister for gender equity and a seven-time Olympian, now a 2020 Olympics organizing committee. (Screengrab)

*Convene* wrote (<https://www.pcma.org/women-speaking-tokyo-olympic-president-comments-spark-debate/>) about how the public outcry over a sexist remark made by the former head of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics organizing committee, Yoshiro Mori, led to his resignation in February — sparking a larger conversation about women and work. “When you increase the number of female speakers at a committee meeting, “if their speaking time is cut short, they have difficulty finishing, which is annoying.”

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After his ouster, a selection panel named Seiko Hashimoto as his successor. Hashimoto, Japan's minister for gender equity and a seven-time Olympian, has been busy righting prior wrongs. Since she took over, according to this week's *The Broadsheet*, *Fortune's* newsletter devoted to women leaders, the organizing committee has created a gender equality team led by Mikako Kotani, Japan's first female Olympic flag-bearer during the opening ceremony of the 1988 Seoul Olympics. Under Hashimoto's leadership, 12 women were added onto the committee's 45-member executive board, bringing the ratio to above the 40-percent target she had set.

According to a March 2021 World Economic Forum report, the ratio of female members on the boards of listed companies was 8 percent — far lower than 26 percent in the U.S. and 33 percent in the U.K.

On a positive note, female athletes competing in the Tokyo games is expected to reach nearly 50 percent — the highest ratio ever, according to the International Olympic Committee.

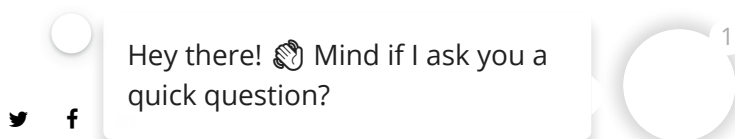
In May, the organizer of the Tokyo games plans to make its pledge to advance equality and inclusion public, CEO Toshiro Muto said in a briefing on April 26, according to an [article in Bloomberg Equality \(https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-04-27/tokyo-to-push-olympic-sponsors-on-gender-after-public-blunders\)](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-04-27/tokyo-to-push-olympic-sponsors-on-gender-after-public-blunders).

Kotani said in an interview in March that the Tokyo committee would follow up by asking sponsor companies, sports bodies, and educational institutions to unveil their own targets. Tokyo 2020 sponsors include Toyota, Fujitsu, and Canon, among other big corporate names.

As reported by Bloomberg, Kotani said in March that she is hopeful that getting sponsor companies to announce gender equality and diversity goals will "nudge forward more female leadership" in Japan. "Our goal is not to restore the reputation of the organizing committee," Kotani said. "We want to straighten up ourselves and put out there the right message to the world as we are under the spotlight."

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🕒 April 28, 2021



<https://www.bloombergequity.com/news/articles/2021-04-27/tokyo-to-push-olympic-sponsors-on-gender-after-public-blunders>

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