



## KEYNOTE SPEECH – EXPO OSAKA 2025

### Achieving a sustainable Society and Economy through the Participation of female Leaders

Good afternoon — esteemed delegates —colleagues —and friends. I am deeply honored to be here in the Women’s Pavilion of EXPO 2025 in Osaka – a place that celebrates not only progress and innovation, but also presence: the presence of women in leadership, in society, in the world, and here, at EXPO 2025!

Allow me to begin with a story.

Some years ago, I was in a boardroom of a German Foundation — the only woman. I had prepared deeply. But what stayed with me most from that meeting was not what I said, but what I felt: the weight of representation. In that room, I wasn't just there for myself — I was there representing every woman who had never made it to that table. And that moment changed me.

In the two European countries where I’m most deeply rooted -Italy and Germany- the presence of women in leadership is still far from equal. Here are just a few key figures from Germany and Italy to give you a sense of where we stand. As you can see, women are still under-represented as CEO, despite the progress we, women, have made and the progress the governments have made.

Only 27% of leadership roles are held by women worldwide. It’s not enough. IT’S NOT ENOUGH!!

It’s not enough! And if you want to stay with me... you can say it in your own language: It’s not enough, non é abbastanza, das ist nicht genug!... please say it in Japanese, too...!

Because, is it really progress if it doesn’t feel like it? What kind of training do women receive for such roles?

What pressures do they face once they arrive?

And most importantly — how do they feel, mentally and emotionally?

Overall “well-being” among executive women remains a concern worldwide. Burnout, loneliness, and lack of support systems are still part of the picture. And yet? — these women stay — They rise. And they lead! — often displaying qualities that are more sustainable and inclusive, than their male counter-parts

I have the privilege to coach women leaders in many sectors; from academia, to entrepreneurship to politics. Many already embody the leadership the world needs: emotionally intelligent, inclusive, collaborative.

What I have learned in my years of experience as a leadership coach, as a speaker and as a book author is that there are three levels of action and to create real change, we must act on these three levels: Personal, Organizational and Governmental.

**FIRST:** At the personal level:

- Empower women through coaching, training, and mentoring

**SECOND:** At the organizational level:

- Design cultures of care with safe spaces for honest conversations

**THIRD:** At the governmental/political level: Create laws & norms to enable women to lead and thrive

*What happens when women lead?* Society transforms. Research confirms that gender-diverse boards perform better and are more socially responsible and innovative.

*But how can we close the gap?* The European Union is taking key steps:

- Pay transparency laws to expose and challenge pay gaps.
- Targets for women: 40% of non-executives' roles or 33% of all director positions by 2026.

In this context public policy isn't just a quick solution – it's a catalyst for true, systemic change and an imperative for sustainable growth and progress for all.

Beyond the data, there is a deeper truth When women lead, priorities shift: Women invest more in people. They build trust. They protect the future not just the quarterly results.

And this is not just theory, this shift is already happening — in communities, startups, universities, public administration, and governments. The change is here.

Take a look at the brand-new German Cabinet. Germany shows that when there is political will, legal frameworks, and transparency — change happens. And it proves a simple truth:

Parity is possible — when it's prioritized.

Structures, data, and accountability make the difference.

So, to every woman in this room, yes, you too in the back — and every woman NOT yet in the room — your colleague, your school friend, your mother, —let me say this: You are not alone. And you are not behind. We are all part of this transformation.

It requires co-creation, collaboration, shared responsibility, and mutual support — between women and men.

I'm here in Osaka also to share the power and enthusiasm I experienced at the United Nations, where I participated at the Commission on the Status of Women together with 12,000 women from around the globe: 12.000 women, one voice: we are ready! Our strength isn't in imitating old models — but in shaping new ones. We carry within us the power to lead differently. And that very difference is exactly what the world needs now.

In Europe we say: "Don't fix women, fix the system!".

Let's stop asking women to adapt to a broken system. Let's invite the system to evolve with women. Let me conclude by saying:

The future needs you; the future needs us — as we are, and as women we are ready to lead.

Thank you. Arigatou gozaimasu.

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