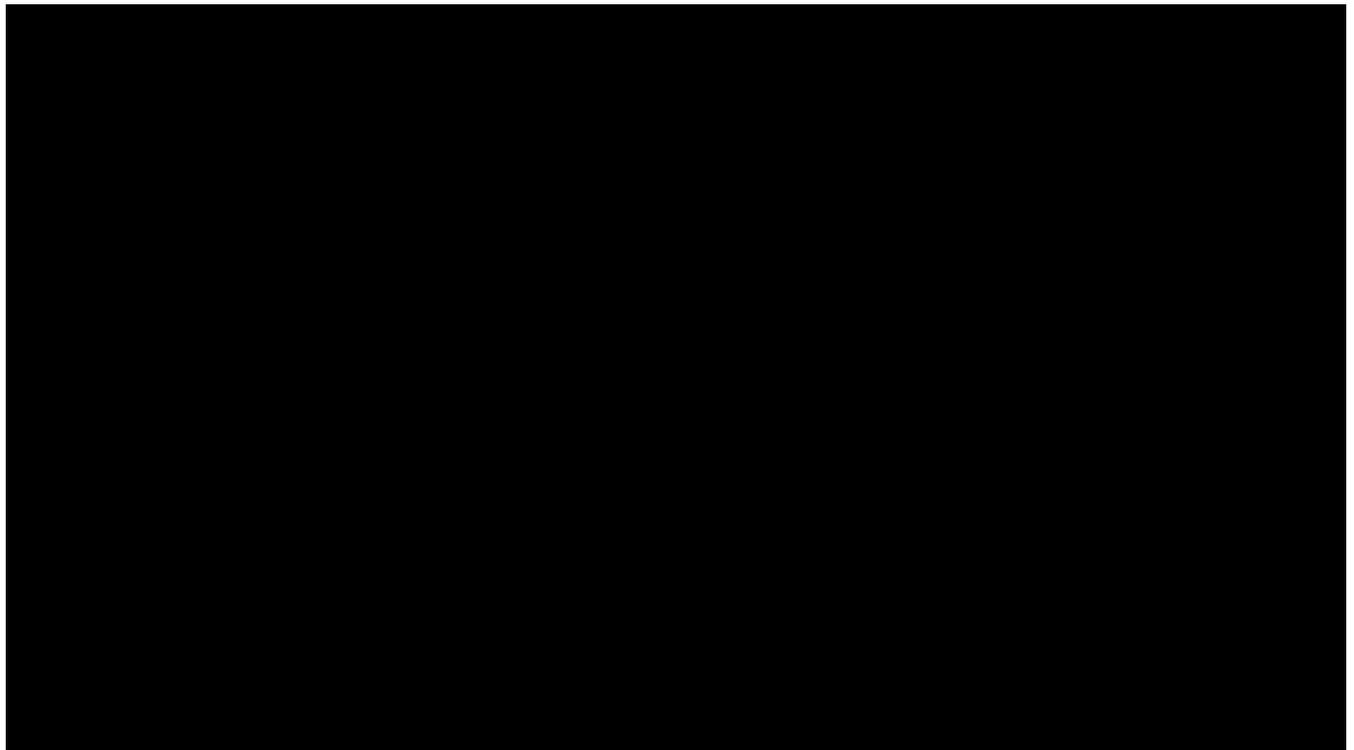


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# Amid uproar for saying women talk too much at meetings, Tokyo Olympic chief apologizes but refuses to resign



Tokyo Olympics chief Yoshiro Mori apologized Feb. 4, for sexist comments he reportedly made about women talking too much, but said he would not resign. (Reuters)

By [Simon Denyer](#)

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TOKYO — Yoshiro Mori, the head of the Tokyo Olympics organizing committee, apologized Thursday for saying women talk too much during meetings, but said he had not considered resigning despite a public furor.

In a news conference, the 83-year-old spoke of his “remorse” for [his remarks](#) and said he took them back. But he showed no obvious signs of regret, and he smiled several times.

Mori, a former Japanese prime minister with a record of offensive remarks, was reported as saying that women have an “annoying” tendency to make meetings run unnecessarily long, offering it as justification for the lack of female representation on the Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC) board.

“If we are going to have more women directors, someone has remarked, then meetings go on for a long time unless we restrict the comments,” he said, according to media reports.

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“Women are competitive,” Mori added, speaking to members of the Japanese Olympic Committee with reporters present. “When one person raises a hand, others think they need to speak up as well. That’s why everyone speaks.”

After the scandal broke, Mori told Japan’s Mainichi newspaper he had been “scolded” by his wife, daughter and granddaughter for the remarks.

[\[Tokyo Olympics chief says women talk too much at meetings, calls it ‘annoying’\]](#)

Yet by Thursday afternoon, Mori seemed comfortable in his position, even as calls for his resignation dominated Twitter here.

“Regarding my remark yesterday, it was going against the mentality of the Olympics and Paralympics,” he told reporters. “I would like to take back what I said, and apologize to those who were offended by my remarks. The Olympics and Paralympics represent the equality of both men and women, and I am thankful for the women athletes and staff.”

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There has been dismay in Japan that no one spoke up in the meeting on Wednesday to express outrage at Mori's comments. Indeed, some members of the committee reportedly laughed.

Mori had been asked about the JOC's goal of having more than 40 percent female members. Only five of 24 members were women as of November.

JOC executive board member Kaori Yamaguchi, who has worked for years to increase the presence of women in Japanese sports, was among those criticizing Mori. "Gender equality and consideration for people with disabilities were supposed to be a given for the Tokyo Games," she was reported as saying. "It is unfortunate to see the president of the organizing committee make such a remark."

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On Thursday, Mori tried to defend himself by arguing that he was talking about the board of the Japanese Olympic Committee rather than the Tokyo 2020 organizing committee.

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He said he merely offered his opinion in response to a question and that he was repeating what he had heard from others.

"I have no thought of resigning," he said.

Mori had already come under fire the previous day after saying the Games would go ahead regardless of the [pandemic situation](#), and suggesting that celebrities taking part in the torch relay should "run through rice fields" to avoid attracting crowds.

Comedian Atsushi Tamura withdrew from the torch relay on Wednesday in protest.

"I don't know if his remarks are simply jokes or slips, but he really hasn't changed and his remarks really discourage people's motivation," he said on YouTube.

"His remark is rude to people who work in the rice fields and to celebrities whose jobs are to be influencers to gather people."

*Julia Mio Inuma contributed to this report.*

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