

Urgent Message from KANBUN
on
the Long-Term Strategy under the Paris Agreement as Growth
Strategy
of
the Government of Japan

On 25 April 2019, the Government of Japan compiled a draft Long-Term Strategy under the Paris Agreement as Growth Strategy. The draft Strategy is based on the proposal on 2 April 2019 by the government council which was set up under the direction of Prime Minister Abe August 2018. As we pointed out last month, the council's proposal itself was far from "under the Paris Agreement" in the following points.

1. Throughout the document, the Strategy excessively depends on business activities and technologies, without describing their viability or effectiveness in terms of people's happiness and social sustainability. As regards the new technologies <Hydrogen society, Carbon dioxide Capture and Storage (CCS), Carbon dioxide Capture, Utilization and Storage (CCUS), artificial photosynthesis, and methanation>, the Strategy provides only superficial recommendation and does not go into details of how to introduce them effectively.
2. The carbon tax, as a policy measure, is quite effective and important with a proven impact for the promotion of a transition of industry structure, life styles and even social values. However, the Strategy refers to the carbon tax only in a few lines just saying the discussion will be continued, nor it refers to any alternative regulation to control CO₂ emissions. This is a complete neglect of the nearly 30 year discussions among experts on the carbon tax, and also of the sheer fact that major countries in the world have already introduced this economic system and have good effects in reducing CO₂. These business-as-usual type of attitudes are completely different from such phrases as "disruptive innovation" or "ambitious vision" appearing in the Strategy.
3. The Strategy touches upon the 1.5 degree target, but it does not say anything about the target of 4% reduction in 2030 or net zero CO₂ emissions in 2050, necessary steps to achieve the target. The 2050 target remains 80% reduction, which is inadequate both as a promise to the global community and as a long-term strategy.

4. The Strategy shows its excessive dependence on the business community and new technologies in various parts of the document in such phrases as “making the most of the wealthy business community with high technologies”, but refers little to the need of civil participation or importance of national and local government policies. What the Strategy calls “unprecedented scale of innovation” will not be achieved without people’s understanding and cooperation in addition to business activities, and effective policy measures are quite essential and a key to successful transition. However, the Strategy depends only on the business, which is quite inadequate as a national strategy. It may be welcomed by a portion of business society, but will not gain full support of sensible people of this country.
5. This government announced the policy of continuing the former Basic Energy Plan which does not reflect the Paris Agreement. This actually means that the nuclear power and coal-fired thermal power will be continued, despite the criticism from global community and the objection from more than 70% of its nationals. Japanese people will not support this Basic Plan, and in particular, the nuclear power plants. Although IPCC still considers nuclear power as an option to reduce GHG emissions, the Japanese government has to understand that the basic conditions are quite different for earth-quake country Japan from countries without earthquakes.
6. In the first place, this government does not see a reality that “intellect” is being decreased in current Japanese society. AI and IOT are just a tool and they will not generate innovations by themselves. It is a human that can make an innovation utilizing those IT tools. This Strategy lacks an important viewpoint of how to nurture “intellect” in our society. There is a description of capacity development under the section of Other Policy Measures, but it shows an old conservative idea of education. What is needed is to build a capacity to envision the future of a sustainable decarbonized society standing on scientific basis and with philosophical mind

The disruptive innovation that IPCC requests is the innovation in “unprecedented scale” across the current civilization. It does not expect just the introduction of such technological elements of hydrogen society, CCS, CCUS, or artificial photosynthesis. Truly, IPCC has a more holistic view of building a new civilization toward a decarbonized society including transition of current industrial structure and economic system, reviewing on-going energy and social system, and even transition of values. However, the Strategy just says “the final goal is to change the economic systems and the ways of life in view of the future in and after the latter

half of this century”; no signs of a strong will to create a new strategy for the benefit of the next generation.

We, the Kanbun, believes that, to realize the “decarbonized society” requested by the Paris Agreement, we should mobilize every potential of human beings and change values and institutional systems introducing technology innovation across all sectors of society including business, citizen groups, NPOs, and researchers. Just a partial change led by the business people would be totally inadequate and insufficient. It is a great pity that, just like the Proposal of the government council in this early April, this Strategy lacks such holistic views of the future of this country. We urgently request the Japanese government to revise the current draft Strategy by reflecting public comments, so that we could proudly host the G20 conferences in this June.

May 2019

Saburo KATO and Konoe FUJIMURA

Authorized NPO “Kankyo Bunmei 21” (KANBUN)