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No More Depts, No More Over-Exploitation of Earth's resources

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As widely reported, Greta Thunberg and young people all over the world are criticizing that global leaders do not at all seriously consider young people's future. The youth are expressing their anger because adults are only talking about the short-term economy.

We, adults, have been hungrily seeking uninterrupted growth leaving a huge amount of debt to future generations. Moreover, we are depriving them of resources necessary for their future living and even of their rights to conduct sound economic activities in their generations.

- Debt - Cumulative CO₂ emission budget deficit

According to IPCC, to avoid more than 2 degrees C increase of temperature (at which human society will fall into crisis), the upper limit of cumulative CO₂ emissions is 2.9 trillion *tons*. However, since 1870, we have already emitted 1.9 trillion *tons*, so only 1 trillion *tons* of CO₂ left for us to emit in the future. We are currently emitting 50 billion *tons* of CO₂ every year, meaning we will reach the upper limit **in 20 years**. If this goes on, current teenagers, when they reach their 30's, will be frequently suffering from such extreme weather events as we saw this year such as heatwaves, heavy rainfalls, desertification, and tornados. At that time, it is highly possible that human beings will face various difficulties in their daily life and will not be able to conduct several activities necessary for us to lead a human life. As a means to decrease CO₂ emissions, some countries like Japan still stick to nuclear power generation. However, as widely known, nuclear wastes have a long half-life of tens of thousands of years. Currently, a total of 17,000 *tons* of high-level nuclear wastes (their disposing method is yet to be identified in Japan) exist in Japan and 2.5 billion *tons* in other countries, which will increase by 1,000 *tons*/year if all existing nuclear power plants are operated. How can we describe this serious situation other than **our Dept for the Future**?

- Resource deprivation/exploitation from the future generation

Regrettably enough, we have already got our hands on various natural resources which should have been conserved for future generations. It is reported that natural resources have devastated by 58% in forty years (1970-2020). The forest area in 1990 was 41.28 billion *ha*, but it was decreased to 39.99 billion *ha* in 2015, and the total forest area decreased in the past 25 years equals to the land area of the Republic of South Africa, according to the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015. More critical is the decrease in species. Almost 40,000 species are said to become extinct in 1975-2000. Forests, besides absorbing CO₂, are a reservoir of various species. A variety of creatures and other biological species are living there, which will make a precious gift of nature. However, the rapid expansion of farmland and pasture, as well as other unsustainable land management, have caused forest/land degradation, which will negatively affect food production in the future. Moreover, we have tapped even underground resources in various parts of the world. We are developing deep-sea resources and mining thousands of meters for shale gas which should be saved for future generations. These acts of human kinds, it seems to me, are depriving our children/grandchildren of their important economic resources.

The Ecological Footprint analysis indicates that already in the 1970s, after lavishly spending natural resources and wasting various materials all over the world, our economic activities exceeded the environmental capacity of the earth. If the current world population live like what we do now in Japan, we will need 2.8 earths, and 5 earths are required if they live like Americans.

Despite those disparate situations of today's world, many people, especially social leaders, are driven by a strong desire for wealth, which makes us feel deeply depressed. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said in his policy speech at the beginning of the current Diet session that his government will prioritize "economy" and overview the diplomatic developments from a global point of view. However, his speech did not at all touch upon climate change issues or the Paris Agreement and only slightly mentioned the marine plastic issue.

The other day, I, together with my colleagues of Green Alliance Japan, visited the Nippon Keidanren (Japanese Business Federation) Secretariat to find out any common ground. Unfortunately, they just repeated that they are voluntarily taking all possible measures against global warming following their "Voluntary Action Plan". They do not even appear to be reflecting on their inability to reduce CO₂ emission or on the loss of many lives/assets every year due to climate disasters.

In the meantime, another serious climate disaster attacked various parts of Japan this September-October, again claiming many lives and assets. Its impacts on the economy (agriculture as well as infrastructure such as rail services, etc.) were quite serious. We, together with scientists, have been warning against these critical situations but our voices have not been listened to. Therefore, we cannot but say that this is a man-made disaster caused by the current government which has been disregarding our warnings and has not taken any meaningful action to combat global warming. Of course, citizens are responsible for their indifference to and lack of a sense of crisis, but it is *the national government* that is mainly responsible for the global level climate change issues.

By now the government should have learned that they have to spend our human/material/financial resources on disaster prevention projects, rather than expensive military equipment. Their commitment to quick recovery from climate disasters is imperative, and moreover, they should seriously consider adaptation policies to minimize potential damages/losses and take every measure to protect future generations from potential climate disasters.

Now is the time for the government to sit down and squarely face climate change issues for our children, and we the voters should keep watching the government. We do not want to give up our responsibility to future generations.