

An Appeal to Prime Minister Abe of Japan

Let COVID-19 open the way to a decarbonized sustainable society!!

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Since the end of last year, the COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) has quickly spread all over the world, causing tremendous damages not only to our lives but also to the global economy. What is worse, the COVID-19 pandemic has more seriously impacted socially vulnerable people suffering from poverty and social gaps. It also presented emerging threats to public health, and governments are struggling to respond to the quickly changing situation.

Nobody will deny the urgent need to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, and neither do we, but we are deeply concerned about the growing "environmental crisis" which tends to be ignored behind the corona crisis. Amid the pandemic, the environment, a sound basis of our lives/social activities, has been neglected, and the environmental crisis has not been addressed properly and timely.

In the international community, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said that revitalization from the COVID-19 pandemic should accelerate "decarbonization" of all aspects of the world economy. In Europe, the European Commission emphasizes the concept of Green Transition (transition to environmentally friendly and sustainable society) as a part of the recovery plan from the COVID-19 crisis.

Looking back to Japan, a few Keidanren member businesses are beginning to realize the importance of green policies. Environment Minister Koizumi organized a meeting with the Japan Climate Initiative, a network of climate action takers in Japan, to exchange views on the idea of green recovery in Japan.

Despite these movements, the current government of Japan has not taken any substantial action to integrate green policies and post-pandemic responses. Rather, taking advantage of the corona crisis, some people are going against the

decarbonization. For example, the new law to strengthen the energy supply was discussed and enacted as a package of bills. The package includes the reformation of JOGMEC (Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation) which could enhance the coal mining, and the bill to establish FIP (Feed-in Premium) and long-distance power grid, which could prevent the expansion of renewable energy. Each of those bills should need careful deliberation, but the Government forced to pass the package of bills in February without discussing each of them in detail. Moreover, the Government pressed the revision of the Act on Special Accounts, which will allow them to divert the budget for renewable energy promotion to the nuclear accident treatments. This budget was combined with the budget for disaster recoveries and forced through the Diet without much deliberation.

To successfully realize the "new mode of life" as suggested by the Government, we need to change not only our values and the ways of life but our society and the economy also need to change. However, from the current administration, we cannot sense a strong will to lead the new life toward a decarbonized society. Instead, they decided to issue a huge amount of bonds and passed the bills on future generations without clarifying how to distribute and use the money. It is a real shame that the vicious practices of unclear policymaking are continuing even after the corona crisis.

We, Kanbun 21, sincerely wish that, while paying ample attention to climate disasters and heatstrokes, the after-corona policies and recovery measures will align with the international trend toward decarbonization and lead us to build a sustainable civil society.