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[Press Release] Japan's updated NDC leaves emission cuts unchanged: Target must be raised with climate and energy policy review within one year (March 30, 2020)

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Press release

Japan's updated NDC leaves emission cuts unchanged:
Target must be raised with climate and energy policy review within one year

March 30, 2020

Mie Asaoka, President

Kiko Network

On March 30, the government of Japan decided on its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), which includes greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and measures for 2030. At the UN Climate Action Summit in September and COP25 in December 2019, the international community was strongly urged to submit updated NDCs to the UNFCCC during 2020, with higher emission reduction targets to address the climate crisis. Despite this, Japan has settled on an inadequate level of effort, leaving unchanged its original reduction target of 26% compared to 2013.

This 26% reduction is not consistent with the Paris Agreement's aim of limiting warming to 1.5°C to 2.0°C, and is entirely inadequate. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has stated that "Dramatic strengthening of the NDCs is needed in 2020. Countries must increase their NDC ambitions threefold to achieve the well below 2°C goal and more than fivefold to achieve the 1.5°C goal." Also, "Given the time lag between policy decisions and associated emission reductions, waiting until 2025 to strengthen NDCs will be too late to close the large 2030 emissions gap." To avoid a worsening of the climate crisis, it is crucial to take bold climate actions during the next ten years, so it is absolutely critical that countries significantly strengthen their NDC updates now, in 2020. In that context, when the government of Japan leaves its NDC targets unchanged, this is equivalent to

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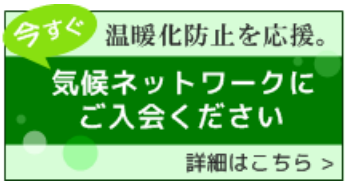

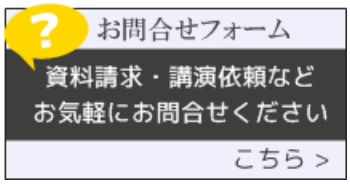

abandoning action in the midst of the climate crisis.

The government acknowledges that it must adopt more ambitious targets in the future, but only states that it will do so without being “held up” until the next five year NDC submission deadline; it has not provided any concrete schedule or process for doing so. Instead of basing decisions on the emission cuts required to achieve the 1.5°C target as demanded by science, the government is aligning its climate policy with a Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) review of Japan’s energy mix is, in effect, irresponsible and dangerous procrastination. Japan’s lack of ambition will also discourage efforts by the international community to strengthen reduction targets, and that too is a serious concern.

This 26% reduction is the same as the target Japan submitted before the adoption of the Paris Agreement. It does not reflect the Paris Agreement’s call for a continued strengthening of targets and actions to achieve net zero emissions based on the latest science as well as the state of technology and society. Over the past five years, advances have been made in energy efficiency and the cost of renewable energy has dropped rapidly, resulting in a growing number of declarations and actions around the world to move away from fossil fuels (effectively, a coal exit). In this context, Japan’s decision to adhere to its original targets essentially ignores the past five years of progress to decarbonize the economy by companies, investors, local governments, and citizens.

Moreover, while the climate crisis is having serious impacts on many industries and every aspect of life in Japan, it is a major problem that Japan’s NDC submission was determined undemocratically, with no public participation or debate, in a non-transparent process that involved only a small subset of government bodies.

The youth and citizens of the world have been raising their voices to demand urgent climate action. It is unacceptable that the government of Japan continues to set unambitious targets and expose the future of our world to increased risks. The government of Japan should promptly announce a process and schedule to discuss stronger targets for 2030. The reconsideration and re-submission of targets must be completed within one year. The targets should be consistent with IPCC’s statements that emissions must be reduced by 45% to 50% by 2030 compared to 1990. Japan should also make a clear transition to an energy mix focusing on renewable energy instead of coal power and nuclear energy. Japan must also make greater efforts for energy efficiency, establish a better regulatory framework that enables a just transition to 100% renewable energy, and adopt effective policy measures that include carbon pricing and regulations on coal-fired power generation. All of this should be done through transparent processes that ensure public participation. There is no time waste in our fight to address the climate crisis.

Related links:

Submission of Japan’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) (government submission, in English)

Emissions Gap Report 2019 (26 November 2019), UN Environment Programme

tag： Climate Policy in Japan

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"Japan Coal Phase-Out: The Path to Phase-Out by 2030" (2020 Edition)（2021/02/16）
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