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[Press Release] Proponents Cancel Plan for Largest Coal Power Plant in Tokyo Bay: Citizens' Groups Welcome the Decision, but 34 Coal Power Projects Still Remain (December 27, 2018)

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Press Release:

Proponents Cancel Plan for Largest Coal Power Plant in Tokyo Bay:

Citizens' Groups Welcome the Decision, but 34 Coal Power Projects Still Remain

December 27, 2018

Citizens Group on Coal Power in Tokyo Bay
Citizens Group on the Soga Power Plant Project
Kiko Network

On December 27, Chugoku Electric Power Co. Ltd and JFE Steel announced the cancellation of plans for a coal-fired power plant in the Soga district of Chiba City (Chiba Prefecture, facing Tokyo Bay), and their intention to instead start considering project feasibility for joint construction of a natural gas thermal power plant. They stated in their release that they judged adequate business viability was not anticipated. We welcome this decision. The cancellation avoids more than 6.42 million tons of CO2 emissions annually, which is the equivalent of about 1.3 million households.

The original plan was to construct a 1,070 MW coal-fired thermal power plant and have it start operating in 2024. The environmental assessment process started in 2016. The region around the site has a long history of industrial air pollution and is exposed to dust and soot from steel plants even now. Local residents concerned about additional negative impacts on air quality established the "Citizens Group on the Soga Power Plant Project" in April 2017. The group reached out to local communities and engaged in many activities, working together with the Citizens Group on the Coal Power in Tokyo Bay and environmental NGOs to urge the proponents to abandon construction plans. In 2017, in response to preparatory documentation as part of the environmental assessment process,

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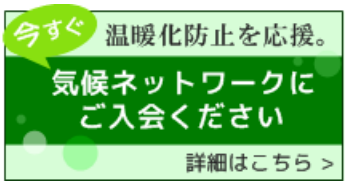

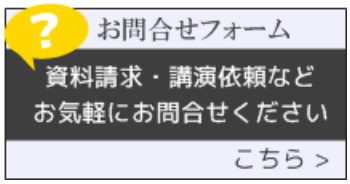

Japan's Environment Minister issued a stern opinion calling on the proponents to "reconsider" the project. Despite that, in January 2018 the proponents initiated procedures (a methodology document) to continue with the environmental impact assessment process. As the process advanced, public opinion grew increasingly opposed to the construction plan.

Key problems with the project were (1) it went against the current global trend of coal phase-out in context of climate change and the Paris Agreement, (2) it would emit serious levels of PM2.5, mercury, and other pollutants, and (3) the site is in close proximity to many public facilities, including a soccer stadium, schools, and hospitals. Over the past year and a half, local community groups in collaboration with other organizations conducted a powerful opposition campaign, including protest actions in front of JFE Steel facilities, to convey the strong message that coal-fired power plant construction is unacceptable. The proponents' announcement was what the local community and environmental NGOs have been persistently demanding.

What we need now to move toward a sustainable society is a transition to new energy systems based on renewable energy and energy efficiency. The proponents announced that they would start considering a natural gas-fired power plant. We call on them to listen sincerely to the voices of the local community and consider initiatives to improve the local environment and introduce renewable energy.

There are still 34 new coal-fired power plants either planned or under construction in Japan. In the context of the decarboniztion, coal power comes with a high level of business risk, so we strongly call upon all the proponents to make the wise choice and cancel them too.

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tag： Coal

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