

【URGENT PRESS RELEASE】

Kiko Network Condemns Keidanren's appeal to the Ministry of Environment

- Eliminating CO2 from EIAs for new coal power plants is inconceivable -

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Kiko Network

On October 22nd, Mainichi Shimbun reported that Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) vice chairman Yasushi Kimura (Chairman of JX Holdings) had a meeting with newly assigned Environmental Minister Tamayo Marukawa and requested the removal of CO₂ emission from Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for new coal-fired plant. The report says that Keidanren made this request because the current EIA process hinders the construction of new coal-fired plants. Keidanren's request is unfathomable as the move runs counter to recent worldwide decarbonization movements to prevent dangerous climate change. Kiko Network strongly condemns Keidanren's request and asks the Environment Minister to promptly reject their proposal.

Originally, the purpose of Environmental Impact Assessment is written as: *Because it is extremely important, in terms of protecting the environment, for a corporation that is undertaking a project that changes the shape of the terrain or that involves the construction of a new structure, or that is engaging in other similar activities, to conduct an environmental impact assessment in advance of such a project, the purposes of this law are to ensure that proper consideration is given to environmental protection issues relating to such a project and, ultimately, to ensure that present and future generations of this nations people enjoy healthy and culturally rewarding lives. In order to achieve these purposes, this law sets forth procedures and contains other provisions designed to clearly define the responsibilities of the government regarding environmental impact assessments and to ensure that such assessments are conducted properly and smoothly with respect to large-scale projects that could have a serious impact on the environment, and prescribes measures to reflect the results of such environmental impact assessments in implementing such projects and in determining the content of such projects. (Environmental Impact Assessment Law, Chapter 1,)*¹* Thus, arguing that EIAs only applies to local environmental contamination would be nothing short of a fallacy.

It is absolutely necessary to have environmental impact assessments for greenhouse gases in place to deal with the critical issue of climate change and to ensure that we can preserve the health and cultures of both present and future generations. In particular, coal-fired power plants remain as Japan's biggest source of CO₂ emissions and should thus be strictly assessed and regulated.

Coincidentally, talks at the Climate Conference (UNFCCC) are currently underway in Bonn, Germany. In the draft negotiation text includes a proposal to reduce investment to high emission projects. Not only developed countries, but now also emerging countries like China announce to shift away from coal. Under these circumstances, criticism towards Japan to continue to promote coal domestically and abroad is getting harsher. If the Japanese government follows in the lead of Keidanren's proposal to promote coal power, Japan might hinder international efforts to construct a successful agreement ahead of the Paris talks. The EIA for coal plants' CO2 emissions should be stricter, but never excluded. Instead, tougher restrictions on emissions should be introduced in order to lead deep emissions reduction in the future.

*1: EIA: Ministry of Environment <http://www.env.go.jp/en/laws/policy/assess/chap1.html>

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