

PRESS RELEASE:

Plans for Climate Change Inducing Coal Plants Must Stop –Minister of Economy Releases Weak Statement on Coal Assessment–

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Today, in response to the first stages of Yamaguchi Ube Power Co. Ltd' s environmental impact statement for the tentatively named “Nishiokinoyama Power Plant” in Yamaguchi prefecture, the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) announced that “as power producers, utilities should make an effort” to establish a voluntary framework in the early stages to reduce CO2 emissions in the power generation industry.

Prior to this, the Minister of Environment, in a statement submitted to METI on June 12th, pointed out that the proportion of coal-fired power generation, which was to be 26% of the energy mix in 2030, had already been exceeded by FY 2013. In addition, the Minister stated that a framework to reduce CO2 emissions has not yet been established as requested by “a key director general's agreement on a Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) bid” . The unclear environmental conservation measures were also pointed out. Concerning the difficulty in achieving the 26% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 as outlined in the INDC , the Minister expressed that “as it is, it is difficult to approve the project” and therefore asked METI to reconsider going through with the venture.

Although the METI has to express his views in light of the statement made by the Minister of Environment, at this time the Minister ended his request just for the establishment of the framework without mention of the project's inconsistency with the energy mix and the director-general's agreement. It' s difficult to say that the Minister seriously considered the statement made by the Minister of Environment.

To keep rises in global temperatures below 2°C, we must review our investment in high carbon infrastructure, which remains the basis of coal-fired power plants. In many countries, anti-coal movements are on the rise citing coal as a barrier to climate mitigation. Even the aim for “26% coal” that is outlined in the government's energy mix draft for 2030 encourages Japan' s reliance on coal. If our dependency on coal doesn't waver, we will have to resort to even bigger cuts in the future.

We urge the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry to become fully aware of the problems caused by coal-fired power plants and to reconsider not only the Yamaguchi power plant project, but also all coal-fired power plant ventures. For power producers, we strongly urge that the project plans be withdrawn and that the utilities instead focus on renewable energy projects in the future.

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