

Press Release

Committee on the Rights of the Child (UN Human Rights Council) urges **Japan to revise climate and coal policies**

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Kiko Network

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC),* established based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, has strongly recommended that the Japanese government reconsider its climate and coal policies in order to protect the rights of children.

The CRC periodically reviews and assesses the status of children in signatory states. On February 1, 2019, it released its concluding observations on Japan. As two of its five recommendations on “Impact of climate change on the rights of the child,” referring to target 13.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the committee recommended that Japan:

- **Ensure that climate mitigation policies are compatible with the Convention, including by reducing its emissions of greenhouse gases in line with its international commitments to avoid a level of climate change threatening the enjoyment of children’s rights, particularly the right to health, food and adequate standard of living;**
- **Reconsider the State party’s funding of coal-fired power plants in other countries and ensure that they are gradually replaced by power plants using sustainable energy;**

This is first time that the CRC made such detailed and direct recommendations to Japan on its climate and coal policies from the perspective of protection of the rights of the child. They can be interpreted to mean that a failure of climate protection measures could put children in danger. Commenting on the recommendations, Kimiko Hirata, International Director for Kiko Network, said, “Japan’s 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction target remains very low and is incompatible with the Paris Agreement. The CRC recommendation sends a clear message that Japan should increase its ambition and update its national target. In addition, government financing of coal fired power plants results in enormous CO2 emissions and accelerate dangerous climate change. To respect the recommendations, this has to stop.”

Dennis van Berkel, legal counsel for Urgenda Foundation, said, “The Committee’s report on Japan leaves no room for doubt: Japan’s climate change and coal-fired power policies are having grave impacts on human rights. The report contains the most detailed recommendation that the Committee has ever made to a government about the need to bring its climate change and coal policy in line with its obligations to protect the rights of children. Children all over the world are taking to the streets to voice their deep concern about inaction on climate change. This report shows that their rights are being violated if governments do not urgently increase their climate ambitions.”

Before compiling the report, the CRC raised a series of questions. Question 8 was “Please explain how the current climate mitigation policy of Japan is compatible with its obligation to protect the rights of children, in particular the rights to health, food and an adequate standard of living, both in Japan and abroad.” In response, the Japanese government explained that to achieve the midterm target of a 26% emissions reduction in FY2030 (compared to FY2013), it is working on energy saving and the maximum use of renewable energy based on the Plan for Global Warming Countermeasures. It also stated that it has actively promoted low carbon technologies in developing countries based on Japanese technology and experience, through a bilateral crediting system (the Joint Crediting Mechanism, JCM) and other programs.

Meanwhile, the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) and the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GIESCR) submitted a briefing note together with Kiko Network, bringing attention to the inadequacy of Japan’s greenhouse gas reduction targets as well as issues relating to Japan’s promotion of coal power.

The CRC recommendations shine a light on Japan’s failure to take seriously the rights of the child in the context of climate mitigation. Kiko Network sees the government’s current climate policies and continuation of coal expansion as the result of an inadequate recognition of the risks of climate change for the child, and calls upon the Japanese government to take the CRC’s recommendations seriously and revise its climate and coal policy swiftly in order to protect the rights of the child.

* The Committee is composed of eighteen independent experts elected by State parties to the CRC. It meets periodically to assess the situation of children in the State under review, and makes recommendations on how the State can work further to fulfil its obligations with regard to the rights of the child.

Reference:

United Nations Human Rights Council, Office of the High Commissioner, Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (see Japan section)

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=1226&Lang=en

Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Japan,

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CRC/Shared%20Documents/JPN/CRC_C_JPN_CO_4-5_33812_E.pdf

Briefing Note to the CRC Committee, in response to the List of Issues for Japan, add link

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