

Press Release

## **Advisory panel recommendations lack concrete targets and policies for decarbonization Government strategy must include coal phase out and 100% renewable energy**

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An advisory panel created by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to look at long-term growth strategies for Japan based on the Paris Agreement (PA) released its recommendations on April 2.

The recommendations state that the long-term strategy should contribute to global goals, promote a virtuous cycle for the environment and growth, have an ambitious vision, aim for a paradigm shift in society, have a sense of urgency, and contribute to the world. They also state that Japan's strategy should aim for the ultimate goal of a decarbonized society as early as possible in the second half of this century, and contribute to the PA's long-term objectives, including limiting global warming to 1.5°C.

However, even though the 1.5°C target is mentioned, the recommendations don't suggest strengthening Japan's current 80% reduction goal by 2050, and just reiterate current targets. This lack of ambition is inconsistent with the 1.5°C target. Furthermore, to achieve the 1.5°C target, it is crucial to accelerate and take bolder action using existing and feasible technologies. Despite this, the recommendations do not propose to raise the level of ambition for 2030 targets, do not delve into more specific measures, and do not signal the shifts in policies and measures that are most needed now.

Notably, construction plans are under way for many coal-fired power plants in Japan, and this current path will lock in enormous amounts of greenhouse gas emissions long into the future. However, the recommendations only mention "reducing coal dependency to the extent possible in order to be consistent with the PA," and make no suggestion of concrete measures. If the aim is really to be consistent with the PA, coal must be completely phased out by 2030, and this report should have clearly recommended that. Similarly, the recommendations should have called for a halt in overseas assistance for coal power, but failed to do so. If Japan's long-term strategy fails to include a major policy shift away from Japan's promotion of coal power, it will be extremely inappropriate as a long-term strategy, and amount to nothing but a show.

Regarding innovation, the recommendations list several problematic technologies that are still far from being practical, such as carbon capture and storage (CCS), carbon capture and utilization (CCU), space-based solar and next-generation nuclear power. It is a serious concern that these technologies are being emphasized as if they could solve everything. An undue reliance on potential future technologies is a dangerous path that only serves to justify the continued use of fossil fuels and a society that consumes excessive amounts of energy, and it delays actions that need to be taken today.

It is commendable that the panel's recommendations clearly show Japan's direction of becoming a decarbonized society. However, we have many concerns about the recommendations in terms of the level of ambition and the path to get there as well as concrete measures and policies. Having these recommendations, we believe that the Government of Japan should formulate a more ambitious and suitable strategy to present to the world before the G20 summit to be hosted by Japan in June this year. It should include the following points.

- Set a long term target to achieve the PA target of limiting warming to 1.5°C, and net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050.
- Aim for 100% renewable energy (100% RE) by 2050.
- Stop all plans to construct coal-fired power plants that are at the environmental assessment stage, have completed that stage, or are under construction, and phase out coal power in Japan by 2030. Also, immediately stop providing assistance for coal power in developing countries.
- Launch a process to update the 2030 target and increase ambition, and review the energy mix for 2030 in order to make steady progress toward 100% RE and a complete coal phase-out.
- Introduce carbon pricing and send out economic signals to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in order to promote energy conservation and renewable energy.

As a final note, we believe the formulation of the panel's recommendations was not an open and transparent process. We call upon the government to ensure that Japan's long-term strategies are formulated through highly transparent processes and with adequate discussion, involving public participation.

## Reference

Expert Panel on Paris Agreement and Long-term Growth Strategy (5th session report) (Link in Japanese) <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/parikyoutei/dai5/gijisidai.html>