

Press Release

2019 G20 Osaka Summit Host Prime Minister Abe Failed to Lead on Climate Issue Japan should Raise its Ambition Level to Reduce GHG Emissions

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Mie Asaoka, President, Kiko Network

On June 29, the 2019 G20 Osaka Summit concluded with participants agreeing on a leaders' declaration. Climate change and energy were important topics on the agenda, and the declaration states that signatories to the Paris Agreement (excluding the United States) "reaffirm their commitment to its full implementation," and by 2020 "aim to communicate, update or maintain our NDCs" (Nationally Determined Contributions). It also states that they "emphasize the importance of providing financial resources to assist developing countries..." On the other hand, the United States reiterated its position to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, as described in a separate clause of the declaration.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had emphasized that as host country of the G20 Summit, Japan would demonstrate leadership to address the climate crisis. However, he took a compromising stance from the beginning to reach a consensus, being considerably toned down in deference to US President Donald Trump's administration. Japan's watered-down draft led to conflict between the US and European countries over the wording, and jeopardized the agreement at one point. Japan's weak stance on climate change was a betrayal not only for governments that are already committed to stronger climate action and a coal phase-out, but also for people around the world suffering from a tangible climate crisis. Citizens' protests were held concurrently in several countries to criticize Japan's climate policy, especially its promotion of coal power. Mr. Abe cannot avoid blame for his lack of leadership on the topics of climate and energy at this Osaka Summit.

Going forward, the Japanese government should more sincerely acknowledge the urgency of the global climate crisis and show the political will to tackle it with the highest level of priority. The Climate Summit to be convened by the UN Secretary-General in September provides another opportunity to do the right thing. We call upon the government to declare its intention to update its NDC with a more ambitious GHG emission reduction target for 2030, in order to be consistent with the Paris Agreement and achieve the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels. We also call upon the government to stop the construction of new coal-fired power plants, eliminate the preferential use of coal, and cancel its now-obsolete policy of providing public financing to support coal power in developing countries. Now is the time to articulate a national vision for 100% renewables, to declare an exit from coal, and to introduce carbon pricing to the market.

Reference: G20 Leader's Declaration

URL: https://g20.org/pdf/documents/en/FINAL_G20_Osaka_Leaders_Declaration.pdf