

<Press Release>

G7 Summit sends strong signals for 1.5°C and net zero Japan must phase out domestic coal by 2030

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On June 11-13, the G7 Summit was held in Cornwall, England. At the summit, the British government, also the presidency of COP26 (the 26th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), raised the issue of climate change as an important issue along with measures addressing COVID-19 and trade. As a result, in order to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5°C, the G7 countries committed to “ambitious and accelerated efforts to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible and by 2050 at the latest”, and increased 2030 targets, with countries that have not yet resubmitted NDCs (nationally-determined contributions) revised with new 2030 targets committing to do so as soon as possible before COP26.

Coal-fired power generation was a key issue at the summit, and it was clearly stated that coal-fired power is the largest contributor to climate change. G7 countries also agreed to stop public support for coal-fired power plants overseas by the end of 2021, a step further than the agreement reached at the G7 Climate and Environment Minister’s Meeting earlier in May. For a long time, the Japanese government has continued to support large-scale coal-fired power generation in Southeast Asia and other parts of the world on a scale second only to China. This has been seen as a major problem, but this marks a turning point that will completely end coal-fired power exports worldwide, Japan included. However, there are practically no new projects in the pipeline. Moreover, the Japanese government’s response to this agreement should be to stop the two ODA (Official Development Assistance) projects that Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is about to provide full-scale support for: the Matabari 2 coal-fired power plant in Bangladesh, and the Indramayu coal-fired power plant in Indonesia.

Regarding domestic coal-fired power plants, the G7 Climate and Environment Ministers’ Meeting resulted in commitments to “rapidly scale-up technologies and policies that further accelerate the transition away from unabated coal capacity” and to an “overwhelmingly decarbonised power system in the 2030s.”

The summit did not produce any further concrete commitments, such as giving a specific time frame or setting out a policy for a complete coal-fired power phase-out. Even so, Japan has continued to strongly oppose this move, citing the domestic energy situation among other reasons, and has resisted specifying a timetable or committing to phase out coal-fired power, revealing its complete lack of readiness to transition away from coal.

The only way to meet the 1.5°C target is for developed countries to completely end coal-fired power generation by 2030. The Japanese government needs to strengthen its policies in earnest by setting a policy of phasing out coal-fired power generation by 2030 in the Strategic Energy Plan, which is currently under review.