Japan Press Weekly

JAPAN PRESS SERVICE

SEND AGAYA 4-25-6, SHIBUYA-KU, TOKYO 151-0051, JAPAN
Telephone: +81-3-3423-2381, Fax: +81-3-3423-2383
e-mail: INFO@japan-press.co.jp
URL: http://www.japan-press.co.jp

ISSN
0287-7112

Special Issue - July 2008

How Should Japan Fulfill Its International Responsibility to Combat Global Warming?

Japanese Communist Party
June 25, 2008

How Should Japan Fulfill Its International Responsibility to Combat Global Warming?

Japanese Communist Party
June 25, 2008

This year is the start of the first commitment period (2008-2012) of the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement on global warming that sets binding targets for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Under the United Nations framework, governments have started international review work to come up with, by the end of 2009, a new action program after 2013. At the upcoming G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit in July, the international community will question what measures Japan takes to address the issue.

How should Japan challenge this grave issue which has serious bearings on the global environment and human survival? The Japanese Communist Party presents its viewpoint on this question.

Prevention of Global Warming Is a Task for Humankind to Tackle without a Moment's Delay

"Warming of the climate system is unequivocal. … Most of the observed increase in global average temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic GHG concentrations. … Anthropogenic warming could lead to some impacts that are abrupt or irreversible, depending upon the rate and magnitude of the climate change," -- the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a scientific body established by the United Nations, drew these serious conclusions based on the collective findings of scientists around the world.

Global climate change is already well underway. In 2003, a heat wave hit European countries taking the lives of 35,000 people, and hurricanes and

cyclones on a larger scale have taken a toll in many places around the world. In Australia, wheat production has dropped sharply in the past two years due to a record-breaking drought, which has become one of the causes of the soaring grain prices. In the Arctic, summer sea ice is melting so rapidly that it could disappear entirely. Mountain glaciers in different places around the world are melting.

In Japan, people's daily life and safety are being threatened by such phenomena as the increase in "tropical days" (days with temperatures exceeding 30 degrees Celsius), frequent occurrences of tornadoes, increases in the intensity of typhoons and low atmospheric pressure systems, increases in record-setting downpours, and storm surges. Their impacts on agriculture, forestry and fishing have become visible as seen in the high temperature associated damage to ripening in rice plants in Kyushu, undergrown mandarin oranges, extinction of coral in the sea around Okinawa, or massive proliferation of jellyfish in the Sea of Japan.

It is important to hold the rise in temperature to within 2 degrees Celsius

The IPCC Report predicts that a rise of global average temperature by more than 2 degrees Celsius from the levels before industrialization could lead to irreversible, grave impacts. Carbon dioxide (CO_2) and methane emissions from soil would be accelerated, while ocean uptake of atmospheric CO_2 decreases due to the rise of water temperature. This could lead to a rapid, dramatic increase in temperature to the level of point of no return.

The average surface temperature has increased by 0.76 degrees Celsius over the past 200 years since the Industrial Revolution. Still, according to any IPCC emissions scenarios, the temperature is predicted to rise 0.4 degrees Celsius more from the present level in the coming 20 years. Without further measures taken to mitigate GHG emissions, the average temperature would rise by up to 6.4 degrees Celsius by the end of the 21st century.

All such data indicating the possible crisis situation calls for serious efforts to curb the global warming trend. It is particularly urgent to take every possible means to limit global warming to no more than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industry temperatures. Otherwise, catastrophic impacts that could threaten the

survival of the earth and human beings are inevitable. Japanese scientists who participated in the writing of the IPCC Assessment Report issued under joint signature an urgent message to the Japanese people in February 2007, which said, "Global warming is progressing at a speed that far exceeds our forecasts. … Immediate steps need to be initiated to slash greenhouse gas emissions." The message by scientists is clear; time is running out to implement measures to slow down and stop global warming.

How is the world acting to prevent global warming?

The IPCC Assessment Report underlines the following three points as key elements to hold the rise in temperature to within 2 degrees Celsius.

> 1) Global greenhouse gas emissions must be halved by 2050 from 1990 levels, and the developed countries are called to cut their emissions by more than 80% (long-term target);
>
> 2) Global greenhouse gas emissions should take a downward turn at the earliest possible time by 2015, and developed countries are called to cut their emissions by 25 to 40% from 1990 levels by 2020 (mid-term target);
>
> 3) By achieving both long-term and mid-term targets, anthropogenic CO_2 emissions must be reduced to less than 1800 GT by the end of the 21st century to stabilize the level of atmospheric CO_2 concentration.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), an international agreement on a global effort to prevent global warming, takes note of the difference in responsibilities each nation bears for the progression of global warming since the Industrial Revolution. It categorizes countries of the world into "(35) developed countries" where "the largest share of historical and current global emissions of greenhouse gases has originated," and "developing countries," making clear the roles and responsibilities of each group.

As a matter of course, all nations and regions on the globe must fully commit themselves to stop global warming, a task for all humankind. Nevertheless,

differences between "developed countries" that have larger responsibilities for furthering global warming through their economic activities since the start of industrialization, and "developing countries" should be taken into account.

In view of historical facts, "developed countries" are to be held accountable for having engendered global warming crisis. In this regard, "developed countries" are called to recognize that they bear the prime responsibility to address the global warming crisis and to play their role appropriately. All countries and regions of the world must be equally entitled to the right to economic development. People of any economically underdeveloped country due to historical circumstances have the historical right to overcome backwardness and develop to the level on a par with developed countries. Seeing things from this position, the quantity of GHG emissions must be equal per capita when viewed in a long-range perspective (carbon democracy). In the present global situation, it has become a panhuman request for developing countries to link the task of their economic development with the world common task to protect the global environment, and therefore to clear a new path for economic development, different from one developed countries have followed so far. This finds expression in an international agreement in the UNFCCC: "their common but differentiated responsibilities."

What efforts are world countries now making based on this international framework?

First, the developed countries.

The European Union (EU) has the common recognition that climate change "is the greatest and widest-ranging market failure ever seen" (Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change), and regards the issue as the pressing task for which all developed countries must assume responsibility. Under the Kyoto Protocol, the EU (15 countries at that time) is obliged to reduce their overall emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 8% below 1990 levels in the first commitment period 2008 to 2012. Among its members, countries which took the lead in economic development and have bigger populations have displayed initiative in taking a greater share of reduction. Great Britain, setting the target for a 12.5% reduction, has already reduced by 15.7% by 2005, exceeding the goal, and it is expected that Great Britain will achieve

23.7% reduction by 2010. The British Parliament is now debating a bill containing provisions that will set a binding target for reducing GHG emissions by at least 26% by 2020 and at least 60-80% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels. Germany, with the target for reducing by 21% in the commitment period, actually reduced by 18.7% by 2005, and now aims at 25.7% by 2010. Further, Germany set the target for reducing by 40% by 2020 and 80% by 2050.

With these efforts, the EU as a whole set a mid-term target for cutting emissions by 11.4% of 1990 levels by 2010, exceeding the target for the first commitment period by 40%, and by 2020 the EU will cut its emissions to 30% below 1990 levels (or to at least 20% if other developed countries do not commit to making comparable reductions under a future global agreement). And as a long-term target, the EU plans to cut by 60-80% by 2050. With these mid-term and long-term programs, the EU intends to reach an international agreement on a framework for reduction.

What situation is arising in developing countries? Among them, in the more rapidly developing countries, emissions of greenhouse gases are also rapidly increasing in accordance with their economic development. What is going on in these countries also affect the total amount of GHG emissions in the world. They have now begun efforts to "control their greenhouse gas emissions and make further contributions to the protection of the global climate system" (China); and to "reduce emissions from the energy sector by 17% by 2025" (Indonesia).

We must pay serious attention to the fact that small island countries and other weak, economically underdeveloped countries, suffering poverty still now, are innocent in terms of responsibilities for global warming and are affected most gravely by climate change.

Developed countries must recognize their responsibilities and take the lead in reducing GHG emissions, and at the same time give financial and technical assistance to developing countries. Developed countries must fulfill these double responsibilities. It is their historical responsibility.

Demand for Japan's Drastic Revision of Policy to Meet International Responsibility

What efforts does the Japanese government make in view of the above-mentioned world trend? Japan has a special responsibility as the chair of the G8 summit at Toyako, Hokkaido where global warming is a major topic for discussion. But Japan's policy is woefully behind other developed countries' measures. In the Kyoto Protocol, Japan set the target for reducing GHG emissions by 6% of the 1990 level, but on the contrary it increased by 6.2%, throwing off its responsibilities for carrying out the panhuman task. The government must accept as legitimate the tough international criticism of its policy.

In order that our country immediately adopts and implements effective policies to combat global warming and fulfill its international responsibility, the Japanese Communist Party demands that the government change drastically its climate change policy into one containing the following targets.

1. Establish clear mid-term targets for drastic, immediate reduction of greenhouse gases and not postpone the task

In the 10 years since the Kyoto Protocol was adopted, the Japanese government has allowed GHG emissions to increase, hiding behind the business circles' intimidating argument that "the imposition of the target for total GHG emissions reduction is economic regimentation" and that "the Kyoto Protocol is an unequal treaty."

The government in March 2008 formulated a Kyoto Protocol Target Achievement Plan. But this plan is not aimed at making substantial efforts to reduce emissions, as shown by the fact that the plan maximally estimates "forest sink" to be 3.8% which has not yet been corroborated, and includes emissions credits bought from other countries, thus trying to pump up an "emission reduction achievement." The reduction target is only 0.6% of the 1990 level.

In addition, the government is still putting off decisions on a mid-term target for reduction. In his speech entitled, "In pursuit of 'Japan as a low-carbon society'" (Fukuda Vision) at the Japan National Press Club on June 9, Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo said that it is possible to achieve "a 14% reduction from the current (2005) level by 2020," abandoning the international agreement on setting the goal based on the 1990 level and shelving the planning of a mid-term target. This must be characterized as a "so-what" attitude. No one in the world will trust such a country that does not make and implement an immediate goal to achieve by 2020 but just talks a lot of things about a vague and distant goal.

In order to fulfill Japan's international responsibilities as a "developed country", the Japanese Communist Party demands the government not merely set a long-term goal of "reduction of 80% by 2050", but set a mid-term goal that clearly presents a steady process towards that goal -- fulfilling the Kyoto Protocol commitment to reduce GHG emissions by 6% of the 1990 level by 2012 and achieving a 30% reduction by 2020.

2. Emissions by business sector, the biggest source, must be substantially reduced

The ineffectiveness of Japan's GHG emissions reduction is caused by a dependence on voluntary action by business circles. The business sector is responsible for 80% of Japan's total emissions. To rein in industry's emissions is the litmus test of whether the government is serious and will be successful in cutting emissions. Unless a fundamental change is made on this point, Japan will never be able to bear its share of responsibility in and contribute effectively to the international efforts to mitigate climate change.

The amount of industrial emission disproportionally concentrates in particular industries emitting large amount of GHGs. As few as 220 facilities, including steel plants and thermal power stations, account for more than 50% of the Japan's aggregate emissions, according to the *Kiko (climate) Network*, an environmental NGO. To promote emissions reduction by these highly GHG-intensive sectors or facilities is the key to a fundamental emissions cut.

To bring about effective and substantial mitigation, we must shed the present attitude of "letting-business-circles-decide." At a first step, there must be official agreements between the government and business circles, if not each industry or enterprise, to set goals and timeframes for emission reductions, clarifying the reduction for each industry sector. To be concrete, the following measures are urgently needed:

Official agreements binding business circles to reduction targets;

National emissions trading scheme to accelerate substantial reduction; and

Environment tax to promote reduction in fossil fuel use.

Official agreements binding business circles to reduction targets

Industries and individual corporations that are major emitters must be obliged to comply with government agreements that set clear reduction targets. If the government establishes medium and long-term reduction goals and clarifies reduction targets for each industry and corporation through these agreements, the way for tangible progress towards emission reduction will be opened. The agreements must include GHG emissions reduction targets -- total quantity of GHG emissions reduction, reduction targets per unit of output, target levels of total energy consumption and reduction in energy consumption per unit of output --, cut-off dates for implementation of the short- and medium-term targets, mandatory reporting to the government, and monitoring and verification by a third party.

National emissions trading scheme to accelerate substantial reduction

An emissions trading scheme (ETS) is a system under which the government allocates emission allowances to companies with installations emitting a certain amount of GHGs; companies that reduce their emissions below their allocation can sell surplus allowances, while others can buy such a quota to make up for their emission excess above their target level, in order to avoid a penalty for under-achievement.

The EU's experience of ETS shows that Japan must also introduce a national emissions trading scheme as an auxiliary measure to help achieve corporations' reduction targets. In doing so, a ceiling must be put on the ratio of emission offset through emissions trading or overseas transactions to the total emissions reduction. There must be a full disclosure on the supply-demand situation of emission quotas and a ban on any transactions divorced from actual emission reduction, in order to prevent turmoil in the carbon market caused by speculative activities.

Environment tax to promote reduction in fossil fuel use

There has been no levy on using fossil fuels, a contributor to the greenhouse effect. In view of the harmful effect on the environment, it is necessary to study the introduction of an environment tax levied according to quantity of CO_2 emission. This tax is intended to have the following effects:

a) It will promote energy conservation and use of alternative energy, by requiring industry, services, and households to pay "penalties" for environmental damage;

b) It will encourage a structural change of the way society works by improving social energy efficiency and encouraging a shift to low emission systems;

c) The differences between relative costs of fossil fuels and that of renewables will be narrowed; and

d) The tax revenue will be used as a resource for preventive actions against global warming and other pro-people policy measures.

The environment tax will be levied according to the quantity of CO_2 produced from burning fossil fuels, including oil, coal and natural gas. It will be incorporated into the state general revenue, which is not tied to any particular purpose for spending. Naturally, the major share of the tax will be borne by big corporations and business circles that consume most of the fossil fuel. There should be an appropriate tax relief or exemption for low-income

earners, medical, welfare and educational institutions, public transportation, small and medium-sized enterprises, cold regions in winter, and the agriculture and fishery sector which will have an impact on food self-sufficiency.

3. Focus of energy policy must shift to development and utilization of renewable energy

Given that 90% of CO_2 emissions is from present energy sources, energy policy is essential to combating global warming. The government, however, does not have any clear goals for a transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy and refuses to introduce a mechanism for purchasing electricity generated by natural energy at fixed prices, a key to expanding use of such energy. The Fukuda Vision even gives priority to constructing more nuclear power plants in its energy policy. But expanding natural energy use is urgently required for Japan to raise its energy self-sufficiency ratio, a condition to economic stability amidst ongoing price rise and strong global demand for oil, coal and other energy sources.

We must make a fundamental change in energy policy, breaking away from overdependence on fossil fuel and nuclear power, and putting more emphasis on renewable energy.

Set target ratio for renewable energy use at 15-20% by 2020

A major shift is occurring in the world towards a wider use of natural energy, such as solar (thermal and photovoltaics), geothermal, wind-power, small hydropower, and biomass, as the EU has decided on a target ratio for renewable energy use relative to the total primary energy use at 20% by 2020. Only Japan is going against the global trend with its natural energy use as low as 2% (excluding 3% by large hydropower electricity plants) of the primary energy use. Japan should have a renewable energy development and utilization plan, stipulating target ratio for natural energy use at 15-20% by 2020 in order to promote technological development and utilization of natural energy.

Regions utilizing natural energy will have new revenues by selling electricity, gas and hydrogen. In Germany, utilization of natural energy enables it to reduce CO_2 emissions by 100 million metric tons annually and create 214 thousand jobs and annual sales of 3.7 trillion yen, resulting in expanding employment, technology transfer, and money flow to localities that are also enjoying the fruits and by-products of natural energy utilization. Thus, the increasing adoption of renewable energy has a positive impact on regional economies.

Introduce a fixed price system to buy renewable electricity

To promote renewable energy generation, long-term profitability should be guaranteed by introducing a mechanism for electricity utilities to purchase electricity from natural energy sources at fixed prices. This system guarantees fixed payments to warrant the cost of production of renewable electricity over an assured period of time (20 years, for example) starting from the introduction of renewable power installations, thereby shielding them from market volatility. These types of payment systems have been introduced in Germany, Denmark and Spain, where renewable energy utilization is expanding rapidly, making them leaders in this sector in the world.

In Japan, the subsidy for solar panels installed at residences, which the government abolished in 2005, must be reinstated. To finance the fixed payment system, the distribution of Promotion of Power Resources Development Tax (348 billion yen in FY2008) must be reviewed to correct the present disproportionate emphasis on nuclear power, and the revenue from an environmental tax be utilized.

Further, cogeneration or combined heat and power (CHP) can increase the energy efficiency ratio from the present level of 40% to 70%. We must aggressively support the introduction of cogeneration through elaborate policy incentives to encourage the growth of small-scale and decentralized use of cogeneration.

Stop promoting dangerous nuclear power with the excuse of combating global warming

The Japanese government is trying to cover about half of the electricity supply by nuclear power generation as if it is a trump card in preventing global warming (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan: "Long-term Energy Supply-Demand Outlook", May 2008). Nuclear power plants, however, are never stable power sources, as seen in the successive suspensions of their operations due to accidents and/or data forgery. The possibility of nuclear accidents as well as the consequential destruction of the environment is also a serious problem. We must not underestimate the risk of environmental pollution by radioactive wastes from nuclear reactors because safe treatment and disposal methods have not yet been found. In addition, active faults have been found one after another under the sites of nuclear power plants, which further shows the irresponsibility of the government and power companies in selecting the locations for the plants. We also must not forget that this easygoing dependence on nuclear power has been a factor in delaying the development of renewable energy.

Such a dangerous policy to promote nuclear power must be abandoned. The government must shutdown, in a systematic manner, nuclear power plant, as they are technically unsound and lack meaningful safety assurances.

Take a Positive Step towards Sustainable Economy and Society, Backed by Public Opinion and Actions

People are taking an increasing interest in the climate change issue. More and more people are working to fulfill their responsibility for the earth today and children in the future, by reviewing their own life-style and switching over to an environment-friendly way of life. According to various opinion polls, more than 90% of respondents worry about damages from global warming, and around 80 to 90% say they are making efforts, such as economizing on lighting, water use, and air conditioning, or carrying their own bags for free shopping bags.

For a drastic shift from "mass production, mass consumption and mass disposal"

We have to face up to the culture of "mass production, mass consumption and mass disposal", which has deliberately been pushed by the profit-first principle of big corporations, and to squarely tackle and rectify this fundamental issue. This finds expression in the following examples: unrepairable home electric appliances disposed one after another due to unavailability of parts; automatic vending machines, two units of which consume as much energy as an average household; around-the-clock convenience stores, each one of which reportedly emits 11 times as much CO_2 as a household; excessive use of electricity after dark; late-night labor and around-the-clock operations at production facilities.

It is required that every aspect of distribution, consumption and disposal be drastically examined with a view to preventing global warming by GHG emissions, and to establishing for both now and in the future a sustainable economy and society and a people-friendly society with priority given to the environment by the efforts of the whole society. We should of course study enacting a law, say a climate protection law, obliging the government to put global warming policy at the center of the country's comprehensive strategy and policy that bears on its future.

Review the economy and society with a view to establishing a people-friendly society with priority given to the environment

There are many pioneering innovations already in place tackling global warming in Japan and the rest of the world, with non-governmental organizations at the forefront. It has become increasingly important for us to learn lessons from their experience, and to expand networks for concerted efforts for spreading and applying their knowledge. It is of great significance to discuss at such grass-root levels as local communities, workshops and campuses what we can do to prevent global warming, and muster wisdom and energy to take action.

As a comprehensive and fundamental task bearing on the future of Japanese society, global warming policy deals with all aspects of the economy, society and politics. In order to carry out this policy without fail, the widest possible social consensus is indispensable. The EU regards tackling global warming as one of the top priorities in its economic and social "Sustainable Development

Strategy." In addition, it puts forth its economic and social policies by always linking them to its global warming policy, as shown in its package for "boosting jobs and growth through climate action." At the basis of their efforts, we can see the philosophy, "Global warming cannot be deterred by the profit-first principle. The fundamental reform of the social system is necessary" (explanation given by Ms. Eva Bulling-Schröter, vice-chairperson of the Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of the German Bundestag to the JCP study delegation to Europe on climate change issues). This is a very important lesson in establishing Japan's policy to combat global warming.

Countermeasures to global warming must be an important part of a comprehensive strategy and policy to work towards a sustainable and socially just Japanese society. The global warming policy must be established by organically linking it to policies on such issues as energy, regional development, employment, welfare, communications, agriculture, the taxation system, as well as the broader issue of the stability of Japan and the rest of the world. It must be promoted step by step by generating public consensus.

In cooperation with all those concerned about the global warming process at home and abroad, the Japanese Communist Party will work hard to prevent further global warming and tackle the task to create a sustainable economy and society and a people-friendly society with priority given to the environment.

-- *Akahata*, June 26, 2008

=JPS BOOKS=

The 21st Century World and Socialism

Theoretical discussion with CPC delegation

By Tetsuzo FUWA

This is a report given by Tetsuzo FUWA on the four-day discussion between the Japanese Communist Party delegation and the Communist Party of China delegation on theoretical issues

A5 size, 142 pages Price: 1,500 yen (plus tax for domestic purchases and shipping)

BREAKING JAPAN'S DIPLOMATIC STALEMATE

By Tetsuzo FUWA

Japan's diplomatic stalemate is very serious today. The principal cause is the Japanese government's attitude toward the wartime past, Japan's war of aggression and colonialism. Every Japanese citizen is called upon to face up to the question "What was that war about?"

A5 size, 64 pages Price: 800 yen (plus tax for domestic purchases and shipping)

JAPAN'S WAR: HISTORY OF EXPANSIONISM

Interview with Tetsuzo Fuwa

Tetsuzo FUWA, former JCP Central Committee chair, gives analysis of the history of Japan's war of aggression for territorial expansion during WWII.

A5 size, 71 pages Price: 1,000 yen (plus tax for domestic purchases and shipping)

(Visa and Master Card accepted)

Published by
Japan Press Service, Tokyo
E-mail: info@japan-press.co.jp
http://www.japan-press.co.jp