

**Renewable Energy Institute's Comment**  
**On Japan's 2050 Carbon Neutral Declaration**  
**45% Emission Reduction is Needed by 2030**

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, in his policy speech to the Diet today, pledged to “reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Japan to net zero by 2050, that is, carbon neutral by 2050, and aim to achieve a decarbonized society.” The U.K., Germany, France, and other countries in Europe, and developed countries like Canada and New Zealand, have set such a target as of last year. Japan should have made this pledge already last year in its “Long-term Strategy under the Paris Agreement”.

Though undeniably late, the fact that the Japanese government has finally set a long-term target for achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement represents progress. In the meantime, many companies participating in the Japan Climate Initiative, and municipalities accounting for over half of Japan's population, had set the target of net zero emissions by 2050 ahead of the central government. It was pressure from these non-state actors in Japan that led to today's decision by the government.

For Japan's policy to be assessed as helping avert the deepening climate crisis, it must commit to the following two actions.

The first is substantially strengthening its GHG emission reduction target by 2030 as well as its target for renewable energy. The current low target of a 26% emission reduction compared to 2013 levels needs to be raised to a 45% emission reduction from 2010 levels, as called for in the IPCC 1.5°C Special Report. To accomplish this, the target for electricity from renewable energy needs to be raised to around 45%, and all coal-fired power plants need to be phased out by 2030. Renewable Energy Institute's “Proposal for 2030 Energy Mix in Japan” released in August makes it clear that appropriate policy actions would make it possible to reduce emissions and promote the energy transition at this level. The proposal calling for over 40% renewable power by FY2030 has already earned the support of many of the country's companies and municipalities.

In his speech today, Prime Minister Suga said, "We will fundamentally shift our long-standing policy on coal-fired power generation." A complete phase-out should be carried out according to his words, including coal-fired power, which has been promoted under the name of "high efficiency". While advocating carbon neutrality in 2050, if the emission reduction target for 2030 is only slightly revised, the announcement today will not be acclaimed by the international community.

The second is crafting a strategy for using renewable energy to decarbonize not just electric power but all energy use, including heat and fuel, by 2050. Globally, the day is dawning when low cost renewable electricity will be supplied on a large scale. And prospects are emerging for meeting the energy demand of the industrial and transport sectors with hydrogen and e-fuels from renewable energy.

Some have discussed using decarbonization as grounds for continuing nuclear power, but because of its rising costs and issues related to safety and final waste disposal, nuclear power cannot be depended on. Further, utilizing CCS as a measure to reduce thermal power emissions is a policy from the past that has already clearly failed in Europe and elsewhere.

The key to achieve decarbonization is maximum use of the ample renewable energy resources in Hokkaido, Tohoku, and other regions, and construction of a core transmission network to make this possible. REI is formulating an energy strategy to achieve a decarbonized society in Japan centered on solar PV and onshore/offshore wind power.

A Japan with net zero GHG emissions is not only decarbonized, it is a country with much higher energy self-sufficiency and much greater energy security that does not need to import fossil fuels at a cost of over 10 trillion yen a year.

Raising the 2030 emission reduction target and setting a high renewables target would make it possible, starting today, to accelerate the transition of business models toward decarbonization and actively call for domestic and overseas investment for the energy transition. Companies competing to develop new decarbonization businesses and municipalities working to develop decarbonized communities, all with the goal of net zero emissions, would make it possible to pass on a sustainable society to the next generation.

Whether we can truly laud the Japanese government's 2050 carbon neutral declaration depends on whether it raises its 2030 reduction target significantly and launch the energy transition necessary for this.

To accelerate Japan's transition to a decarbonized society, Renewable Energy Institute will continue making necessary policy proposals and strengthen partnerships with a broad range of non-state actors.

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