

Japan's position inför COP18 – nationella, regionala och internationella frågor

Japan's stance towards COP18- domestic, regional and international issues

Prime Minister Noda has dissolved the Lower House of the Diet on 16 November and Japan will be attending the COP18 in political uncertainty, as general elections to reconvene the House will not take place until 16 December.

On 15 November 2012, representatives of Ministry of the Environment (MoE, names listed at the end of the document) were interviewed to gain understanding of Japanese position going into the COP18 negotiations. This document covers Japanese stance on its domestic measures, regional cooperation and international negotiations.

For the domestic policy, MoE has stressed the Bill of the Basic Act on Global Warming Countermeasures¹ approved by the Cabinet in March 2010 remains to be the domestic measure though it has failed to be discussed by the Diet due to resignation of then Prime Minister Hatoyama. The Bill was proposed in four Diet sessions but with the adjournment of the Diet on 16 November, it has officially been scratched. However, the two of the main pillars of the Bill, Feed-in-Tariff and Carbon Dioxide Tax, have been implemented, while the third pillar, emission trading scheme is not.

Before the interview, an advisory council to the government called the Energy and Environmental Council has announced the Innovative Energy and Environment Strategy, which called for nullifying nuclear dependency by 2040. However the Strategy was not approved by the Cabinet in its entirety failing to give it a legal

¹ The Bill stated Mid-term goal to be reduction by 25% by 2020 compared to the 1990 level, with participation of all major economies and the long term goal to be 80% reduction by 2050 compared to the 1990.

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status nor the Basic Energy Plan established. Without the having any legal legitimacy, should the election boot out the current political party Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) out of office, the Strategy itself may be scratched. During the interview, MoE stressed Innovative Energy and Environment Strategy is enough to draw a domestic climate bill, however, the author feels the Basic Energy Plan, which will indicate the goal and trend in the future energy mix, is essential in giving any real content to a domestic climate bill. MoE also stressed having domestic policy in place is not so important to discuss future international framework.

Some of the regional initiatives Japan undertakes were also introduced at the briefing. As it has been strongly advocated by the Japanese negotiating team, Joint Credit Mechanism² continues to be a framework Japan wishes to continue to pursue. Projects under the framework of Joint Credit Mechanism³ will resume in April 2013 regardless of the decisions at COP18. Japan seeks COP to establish the mechanisms, including some form of peer-review scheme. What ratio of the reduction Japan will depend on JCM to meet the mid-term goal and what document it will be stated in is uncertain at this time. Japan feels Joint Credit Mechanism remains unclear to the global community and that the trust and credibility on the system is yet to be earned. Countries which Japan is considering JCM remains unrevealed at the time of press, however, Indonesia and Japan have announced the collaboration in this framework early October 2012.

Japan takes part in the Major Economies' Forum, which met in late September 2012. It has generally agreed to the new action plan suggested by the US emphasizing energy efficiency in buildings. Japan supports the International Research Network for Low-Carbon Societies (LCS-RNet)⁴ to facilitate the interaction between researchers and various stakeholders, and delivers their findings to policy-makers. The mission of the network is for developing countries to draw their own vision of low-carbon society and to assist science-based policy making in those countries, an experience which Japan has valued in its policy-making. Additionally, East Asia Low Carbon Growth Partnership Dialogue is valued by Japan as the Dialogue convenes 18 countries consisting of 63 per cent of the global emission and highly vulnerable areas to climate change. When asked about the regional cooperation in the north-east Asia region, especially with South Korea, which is gaining its international reputation in its work with green growth, MoE answered it is limited to exchange of views and information and no concrete action of collaboration is pursued.

Mr. Tsukamoto, the senior of the attendees of the briefing, feels COP18 falls in a good political timing for real negotiations and welcomes the US and China having stable leadership coming to Durban. Expected outcome of COP18, as similarly

² Also known as Bilateral Off-set Credit Mechanism (BOCM). Japan has previously used this terminology, however now uses both BOCM and JCM. The government is unable to decide at this moment, as some expected partner countries prefer to use the term BOCM over JCM while others prefer the vice versa.

³ Also known as Bilateral Offset Credit Mechanism (BOCM). Japan has previously used this terminology, however now uses both BOCM and JCM. The government is unable to decide at this moment, as some expected partner countries prefer to use the term BOCM over JCM while others prefer the vice versa.

⁴ The details of LCS-RNet can be found at <http://lcs-rnet.org/index.html>

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stated during the Pre-COP Ministerial meeting in October 2012, is the successful finalization of Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA) and Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) and to establish a concrete work plan for Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) to come to common understanding on the framework of the negotiation process. It also hopes to see a workshop convened to motivate the multiple stakeholders of the legal framework sometime during 2013. At COP18, Minister Hiroyuki Nagahama⁵ will lead the Japanese negotiating team at COP18, with Ambassador Masafumi Ishii as the chief negotiator.

Attendees from the Ministry of the Environment, Japan

- Mr. Naoya Tsukamoto, Director, International Strategy Division, Global Environmental Bureau
- Mr. Akira Nitta, Director, Office of International Strategy on Climate Change, International Strategy Division, Global Environmental Bureau
- Mr. Yoshitomo Mori, Deputy Director, Research and Information Office, Policy and Coordination Division, Global Environmental Bureau
- Ms. Akiko Inagoya, Technical Official, Research and Information Office, Policy and Coordination Division, Global Environmental Bureau

Other attendees: representatives from Embassies of Finland (organizer), Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

⁵ Minister Nagahama is a member of the Upper House and not of the Lower House which is up for general elections on 16 December 2012.