

Statement by Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama at the United Nations Summit on Climate Change

New York, 22 September 2009

Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to address this timely meeting of the United Nations Summit on Climate Change. I was appointed as Prime Minister of Japan six days ago, in a historic change of government achieved through the will of the people at the recent elections.

Climate change affects the entire globe and requires long-term and international efforts. Thus, it is imperative for all countries to address the issue under the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities". With the change of government, as Prime Minister of Japan, I will now seek to unite our efforts to address current and future global climate change, with due consideration of the warnings of science.

[Reduction targets]

Allow me to touch upon the issue of reduction targets for greenhouse gas emissions.

Based on the discussion in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), I believe that the developed countries need to take the lead in emissions reduction efforts. It is my view that Japan should positively commit itself to setting a long-term reduction target. For its mid-term goal, Japan will aim to reduce its emissions by 25% by 2020, if compared to the 1990 level, consistent with what the science calls for in order to halt global warming.

This is a public pledge that we made in our election manifesto. I am resolved to exercise the political will required to deliver on this promise by mobilizing all available policy tools. These will include the introduction of a domestic emission trading mechanism and a feed-in tariff for renewable energy, as well as the consideration of a global warming tax.

However, Japan's efforts alone cannot halt climate change, even if it sets an ambitious reduction target. It is imperative to establish a fair and effective international framework in which all major economies participate. The commitment of Japan to the world is premised on agreement on ambitious targets by all the major economies.

On the establishment of the domestic emission trading market, we will promote exchange of information on systems of other countries, and hold discussions on the issue, bearing in mind the impact on international competitiveness as well as possible future linkages among countries.

[Support for developing countries]

Climate change requires a global response. In the process of furthering sustainable development and poverty reduction, developing countries must aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities". This is especially important for developing countries with large emissions.

Solving the problem of climate change will entail a vast amount of financial resources, in particular to support adaptation efforts by vulnerable developing countries and small island countries. Such financing should be strategically expanded. Japan is prepared to provide more financial and technical assistance than in the past, in accordance with the progress of the international negotiations.

Public financial assistance and technology transfer to developing countries are critically important.

However, they alone will not meet the financial needs of developing countries. I therefore intend to work with world leaders on creating a mechanism that not only ensures the effective use of public funds but also facilitates the flow of private investments.

Japan deems the following four principles essential in assisting developing countries:

First, the developed countries, including Japan, must contribute through substantial, new and additional public and private financing.

Second, we must develop rules that will facilitate international recognition of developing countries' emissions reductions, in particular those achieved through financial assistance, in a measurable, reportable and verifiable manner.

Third, on assistance to developing countries, consideration should be given to innovative mechanisms to be implemented in a predictable manner. And an international system should be established under the auspices of the UN climate change regime. This system should facilitate one-stop provision of information on and matching of available bilateral and multilateral financing, while securing transparency and effective utilization of assistance.

Fourth, Japan proposes to establish a framework to promote the transfer of low-carbon technologies which ensures the protection of intellectual property rights.

I would like to propose to the international community a "Hatoyama Initiative", based on what I have just outlined. The Kyoto Protocol was a historic milestone, as the first international framework that obligated nations to reduce greenhouse gases. Effective efforts, however, cannot be realized unless a new framework is created. To that end, towards establishing a fair and effective new single undertaking, I will exert every effort for the success of Copenhagen, in the course of formulating this initiative.

[Conclusion]

Active measures to address climate change such as the Green New Deal initiated by President Obama will open new frontiers and create new opportunities for employment in the world economy, particularly in such fields as clean energy technologies, including electric vehicles, and solar power generation.

Japan has relatively strong potential for technological development as well as considerable financial capacity. Thus I recognize that Japan is expected to take the lead in the international community in setting its own reduction target, and to achieve such target through the development of innovative technologies. I have full confidence in the abilities of the Japanese people and our companies. Political leaders at this time also have a responsibility to future generations to create a sustainable society by transforming the social structure that we have known since the Industrial Revolution.

In conclusion, I wish to make a strong appeal to you to work together, so that we will be able to make significant achievements in Copenhagen in December and that the people of the world will be able to say that their leaders made crucial decisions for the sake of future generations.

Thank you very much.