



Ministerial Conference on the 3R Initiative

THE EXPERIENCE OF JAPAN AND ITS ACTION PLAN FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE 3Rs - Challenge to Establish a Sound Material-Cycle Society -

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Socio-economic activities characterized by mass production, mass consumption and mass disposal expanded in the 20th century, contributing to greater material prosperity for humankind. However, increases in the volume of wasted resources and in environmental pollution have been emerging. In order to address this, our current lifestyle and economic activities should be reviewed at a fundamental level.

In this regard, the Government of Japan has been promoting efforts aimed at the creation of a sound material-cycle society in which consumption of natural resources is reduced and environmental impacts are abated through the promotion of the 3Rs. Here I will be addressing Japan's efforts in view of the five issues central to the Ministerial Conference on the 3R Initiative.

To promote the 3Rs, it is necessary to advance activities across the life cycle of a product, covering manufacturing, distribution, consumption and recycling or disposal, with participation by a broad range of stakeholders. The Government of Japan, for example, has been promoting the use of parts which can be recycled in the manufacturing stage, simplification of packaging in the distribution stage, and green purchasing in the consumption stage. Also, the recycling of containers and packaging, home electric appliances, vehicles and computers has been conducted in line with individual laws.

In order to promote the 3Rs efficiently, it is necessary to identify the basic roles of each stakeholder as well as to set up a system in which specific targets are set forth and the status of actions is reviewed on a regular basis. To this end, the Japanese Cabinet decided in fiscal 2003 on the Fundamental Plan for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society as the fundamental plan to establish such a society.

The Plan falls into the ten-year framework of programs to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production as recommended in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Under the Plan, quantitative targets are set up with fiscal 2000 as the base year and fiscal 2010 the target year for resource productivity, cyclical use rate and final disposal amounts, and progress towards these targets is being reviewed annually.

This year, the Government of Japan will be launching something new. This will include stipulation of regional plans for establishing a sound material-cycle society in collaboration with the central government and local governments, in which specific targets are set up for the promotion of the 3Rs and necessary policy measures are implemented as a package.

Aiming at realizing a zero-waste society, we are committed to taking various measures to shift existing waste treatment and recycling systems into systems more suitable for a sound

material-cycle society. These measures include the enhancing of efforts regarding environmentally-sound products which consider the 3Rs throughout all stages, even from their design and manufacturing stages, as well as the expansion of the market for environmentally-sound products, the review and assessment of individual recycling laws, the reduction of household wastes by levying waste treatment fees, the strengthening of measures to eliminate illegal dumping and illegal export of wastes, and technology development.

The second issue is the reduction of barriers to the international flow of goods and products.

As global economic growth and free trade advance, the volume of the international flow of goods and products has been expanding drastically. Also, we have been witnessing a rapid increase in transboundary movements of wastes and recyclable resources. In addition, in developing countries, waste generation is recognized as one of the major urban issues along with the environmental pollution caused by illegal imports and unsound treatment of wastes.

There exist trade barriers to the international flow of goods and materials and clean development relevant to the 3Rs. The 3R approach will contribute to the reduction of those barriers, the efficient use of resources and the conservation of the environment as well as bring economic benefits. Relevant bodies including the Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) have been working on the reduction of barriers to environmental goods and services, and advancement of those activities is expected.

Domestic minimization of wastes should be prioritized when addressing the international movement of wastes. In this regard, it is crucial to implement 3R activities within countries. Also, when sound recycling and reuse is conducted abroad, a fundamental condition is that environmental pollution which may otherwise accompany transboundary movement of wastes is being prevented. Thus, exporters and importers of wastes are required to collaborate in preventing environmental pollution.

In this context, the Government of Japan has been working on strengthening measures to prevent the illegal import and export of wastes as well as measures to maintain equitable rules. In December 2004, we held a workshop on the prevention of illegal import and export of wastes, in which officials in charge of implementing the Basel Convention in countries in Asia participated. In this workshop, participants reached an agreement on setting up a network to prevent the illegal import and export of hazardous wastes within the Asian region. We would like to further strengthen our linkages with Asian nations.

The third issue is cooperation between developing and developed countries.

It is important to further develop policies and institutions for 3Rs and to raise public awareness in developing countries. In this context, Japan has been providing support in policy making for waste treatment in developing countries. I believe that support for capacity building and technology assistance to establish sound material-cycle societies will be necessary in the years to come.

In order to disseminate the 3Rs to the Asian region as well as to the world, cross-border cooperation, both regional and global, is essential.

To this end, we are committed to strengthening the linkages among international institutions and relevant countries with the nations of the G8 at the core and we are also committed to international cooperation with developing countries in the form of policy dialogues at various levels and capacity building. Also, we are committed to promoting efforts by various

stakeholders, including at an international level not only central governments but also local governments, business entities and NGOs, through the sharing of information on 3R activities and the establishment of a network related to 3R activities.

The fourth issue is cooperation among various stakeholders.

It is essential to establish partnerships among various stakeholders for the promotion of the 3Rs. In Japan, we have a waste collection system conducted by civil groups, in which members of the local community jointly conduct waste collection and recycling of items. In order to further develop this kind of community-based activity, local governments need to play a coordinating role under the initiative of the heads of local governments.

I believe that enhanced private-public partnerships will be especially essential in the years to come. It is crucial to promote proactively the formulation of partnerships by collecting good practices across the globe and then analyzing what constitute the keys to success and what incentives exist within successful efforts.

Also, the promotion of partnerships among different businesses categories is important. With this kind of partnership, wastes will be reduced by having waste products from one company used as raw materials for another, resulting in strategies that are “win-win” both environmentally and economically by reducing both environmental impacts and procurement costs. Furthermore, the Eco-Town Project has been promoted in Japan to develop hubs to enable recycling of various wastes in terms of quality and quantity, an idea whose further development will be pursued in the months and years ahead.

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Future areas of actions to be enhanced include research on a system which enables local-level material flows, research on understanding and assessment of material flows, clean technology development to promote the 3Rs during the manufacturing stage, and technology development to promote the 3Rs during the designing stage.

Also, the promotion of international research cooperation regarding the 3Rs is crucial. International joint research on material flow analysis by relevant bodies, with the OECD at the center, was launched and has already met with success. I believe that further development is necessary, with joint analysis of international flows, application to future material flow projections, and so on being applied to actual materials. In addition, the enhancement of

information exchange, the exchange of researchers and joint research for the development of tools for the 3Rs, such as means of sustainable materials management, is needed. To this end, we would like to push forward the establishment of a research network, initially in Asia.

Japan is committed to enhancing international promotion of the 3Rs with this Ministerial Conference on the 3R Initiative as a turning point. In this regard, we have developed an action plan under the initiative of Prime Minister Koizumi and released it just yesterday. The action plan consists of three pillars, namely, the realization of a zero-waste society within Japan, after which we will disseminate our experience to the world; support for developing countries towards the establishment of zero-waste societies; and international cooperation to enable zero-waste societies to spread around the globe.

We are committed to enhancing collaboration with relevant countries, most notably the nations of the G8, as well as with international organizations such as UNEP and the OECD, as well as to promoting actions taken by relevant stakeholders, including the enhancing of the knowledge base and technology base to enable zero waste and the international promotion of green purchasing by means of information sharing and networking. We propose to convene a meeting at the senior official level and international organizations to follow-up this Ministerial Conference on the 3R Initiative.

Japan has a traditional spirit of not wasting anything that still has some value and we express this concept in the words “mottainai.” This idea is exactly what we want to accomplish through the 3R Initiative. The 3R Initiative is an action to share the spirit of “mottainai” all over the world and reform our mass production, mass consumption and mass disposal socio-economic system into a new one which can bring about sustainable development.

Taking these actions, we are committed to contributing proactively to encouraging countries across the globe to make coordinated efforts to enhance mutual benefits as well as to advance a sound material-cycle society in which the environment and the economy are fully integrated.

Thank you very much.