



Greetings

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With environmental issues at the top of its agenda, the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit is slated to take place in Japan this year. In regard to the global warming issue, the world is now undergoing an important transition, as evidenced by the Bali Action Plan (adopted at the 13th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December last year), that aims at drastically reducing greenhouse gas emissions responsible for global warming. With the support of all major emitting countries, as well as the developing countries, the Bali Action Plan is gaining momentum and influence.

The international community is also making steady progress in dealing with the waste and resource issues. For example, the 3R Initiative proposed by Japan in 2004 has spread into many countries. Efforts to build a sound material-cycle society can be seen not only in developed countries but also in developing countries.

Japan, with the world's most advanced energy conservation technology and the experience of having overcome pollution and waste problems, must set an example for other countries as an environmentally progressive nation. As the chair of the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit, Japan must lead the world's discussions in this direction. However, Japan also has its own issues to resolve, including the increase in greenhouse gas emissions compared to the base year. With these issues in mind, Japan's Annual Report on the Environment and the Sound Material-Cycle Society of this year presents the initiatives taken by Japan and other countries in the world in their attempt to build a low carbon society and a sound material-cycle society.

To build a low carbon society, Japan must take the lead in not only fulfilling its Kyoto commitment of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 6%, but also achieving further reduction of any significance. This would require Japan to make fundamental changes in the patterns of investment, production, and consumption with the participation of all actors that make up the society. Besides spearheading efforts to arrest global warming within the framework of international cooperation, Japan must also make an international contribution by sharing its experiences with the developing countries. For this reason, the report offers a broad introduction to world trends and initiatives taken by Japan to create a low carbon society as well as assistance measures that Japan has adopted to help developing countries.

Japan needs to build a sound material-cycle society based on the Second Fundamental Plan for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society in concert with initiatives for building a low carbon society. All actors of the society, including the national and local governments, businesses, and citizens, shall work closely to accumulate experience and expertise and utilize them to build a stock-based society that cherishes quality and durability. From the perspective of revitalizing local communities, it is also important to establish sound material-cycle blocks. Furthermore, Japan needs to show the international community the way to create a global scale sound material-cycle society by utilizing Japan's experience to establish a sound material-cycle society in Asia. With this as a backdrop, the report takes a retrospective look at Japan's history in advancing towards a sound material-cycle society from the Edo Era and describes how Japan is utilizing its experience to assist developing countries through international cooperation.

This report is the Overview section of the Annual Report on the Environment and the Sound Material-Cycle Society in Japan 2008 approved by the Cabinet and submitted to the Diet of Japan on June 3, 2008. We would be happy if this publication could communicate to readers Japan's enthusiasm for environmental policies and measures and the initiatives it has taken.

Thank you.