

Remarks by Dr. Toshiko Abe,
State Minister for Foreign Affairs
at the 1st Meeting of the G20 Climate Sustainability Working Group
(Tokyo, February 14, 2019)

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to all of you to Japan.

Last year, in every corner of the world, we saw severe natural disasters one after another, starkly reminding us of the seriousness of climate change. In fact, Western Japan including my constituency, a part of *Okayama* prefecture, suffered from heavy rain last summer. It caused collapses of banks, and a vast area was inundated above the floor level. This heavy rain broke many records. More than 200 people lost their lives. A flood disaster of this scale happens for the first time in these 30 years. As you can see the screen, total precipitation from June 28th to July 8th in *Motoyama*, *Kochi* prefecture recorded nearly 4.5 times more than average monthly July precipitation. Such heavy rain is estimated to increase with high confidence, if the global warming continues to get worse.

The occurrence of such events again made us realize the pressing need to sincerely face and take actions against this on-going issue of climate change. The IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5-degree also alerted us of the impacts and risks for natural, managed and human systems. The report says that coral reefs are projected to decline by 70 to 90% at 1.5°C increase. If at 2°C increase, there will be larger losses.

Now, as we gather here to represent each of our country, the total sum of our representation accounts for 80% of the global greenhouse gas emission — the whole world is paying close attention to what message we will deliver as the G20 in tackling this big challenge of climate change.

Some worry that climate change measures might restrict free economic activities. However, while climate change is huge risks on the economy, it is also beginning to create business opportunities, as we see the expansion of renewable energies and ESG (Environment, Social, Governance) investments. The issuance of green bond last year exceeded 160 billion US dollars.

What is needed most is such positive cycle of environment and growth, and the paradigm shift to encourage business-led innovation of technologies. For that to happen, as Prime Minister Abe called for at the World Economic Forum at Davos, we need “disruptive innovation” and more resource mobilization for such innovations. As an example of “disruptive innovation”, Japan is aiming to reduce the production cost of hydrogen by at least 90% by the year 2050 and realize a hydrogen-based society, and to that end, we need such innovation to take place more often.

In light of the above, it is my sincere hope that today’s meeting of G20 Climate Sustainability Working Group (CSWG) will find many creative solutions. The Government of Japan will, on its part, try to present unconventional visions and contribute to the global efforts in lowering emission.

I would like to conclude my remarks by wishing you a forthcoming and productive meeting for further progress in global climate change measures. Thank you very much.