

Speech by H.E. Mr. Kazuo KODAMA,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the European Union
at the Ministerial Session of the 29th Meeting of the Energy Charter Conference
on 28 November, 2018

Your Excellency Mr. Anton Anton, Minister of Energy of Romania,
Your Excellency Mr. Robert Tudorache, State Secretary, Ministry of Energy of Romania,
Dr. Urban Rusnák, Secretary General of the Energy Charter Secretariat,
Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Heads of International Organisations,
Ambassadors, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Japan, let me introduce Japan's ideas regarding the subjects of this session: Namely, energy transition perspectives and the role that innovation plays in the path towards a sustainable energy future.

Firstly, allow me to share with you Japan's situation with regard to our long-term energy targets. The Government of Japan set out its fourth Strategic Energy Plan in 2014 based on the experience of the Great East Japan Earthquake and the sequential accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.

Four years have passed since then. Last July, the Government of Japan set out its fifth Strategic Energy Plan in a context of rethinking its energy choices once again in response to the entry into force of the Paris Agreement and the changing energy situation.

The plan sets out the guidelines towards a 26% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Japan by 2030 based on the Paris Agreement. It directs Japan to strengthen actions to ensure its energy mix, while adhering to previous policies including thorough improvement of energy efficiency, maximum deployment of renewable energy, the streamlining of thermal power generation and the reduction of dependency on nuclear power as much as possible.

The plan also proclaims that Japan will pursue every means to achieve energy transitions and decarbonisation by 2050. Grounded on this vision and based on our determination to take a lead in energy transitions and decarbonisation around the world as well as to realise a virtuous circle that brings both environmental protection and economic growth, Japan is currently developing long-term growth strategies to improve the low carbon economy and society in general.

Mr. Chairperson,

Japan considers it important to bring about optimal energy systems which are tailored to domestic circumstances in each country, to promote innovation and to pursue every option to achieve global energy transitions and decarbonisation.

In recent years, the cost of renewables has dramatically decreased in many parts of the world through technological progress.

On the other hand, while the introduction of renewables is expanding worldwide, ensuring the steady control of the naturally fluctuating output of renewables has become a global issue. It is important, for example, to develop innovative batteries and digital technology to ensure the grid stabilization, and to utilize distributed energy resources for adjusting supply and demand of electricity such as demand-response, in order to promote of the further introduction of renewable energy.

The role played by natural gas and LNG as flexible backup power sources is also important for responding to natural fluctuations in the output of energy. Japan is collaborating with other countries to develop a more transparent, flexible, highly liquid international LNG market.

Also, hydrogen-related technologies will have a major role in realising energy transitions and decarbonisation. Japan held the ‘Hydrogen Energy Ministerial Meeting’ on 23 October for the first time on a worldwide scale. In this Meeting, participants confirmed the importance of global collaboration in the field of hydrogen and shared future policy proposals for approaches to the utilization of hydrogen across the world. As an outcome of the meeting, the Tokyo Statement, the chair’s summary of the meeting, was released.

Japan is the chair of next year’s G20. The G20 Ministerial Meeting on Energy Transitions and Global Environment for Sustainable Growth is planned to be held on the 15th and 16th of June, where participants will discuss how to further promote energy transitions and decarbonisation by innovation, with an eye on the role of hydrogen and other energy sources.

Mr. Chairperson,

Japan has committed to contribute to the world by engaging the power of our advanced technology and innovation.

As a concrete action, Japan established "The Fukushima Plan for a New Energy Society" in September 2016, the aim of which is to achieve maximum expansion in renewable energy, and to create in Fukushima a model for realizing the new energy society of the future, where hydrogen is produced from renewable energy, stored, transported and used. A project is now in progress to produce hydrogen extensively from renewables and to utilise it not only for Fukushima but also during the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics in 2020.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is necessary to develop these innovative achievements into actual investment in the energy field. From this perspective, the Energy Charter Treaty, a multilateral investment protection treaty in the energy sector, is of increasing importance. The application of the treaty in more countries has great potential for further contributing to the sustainable energy future.

Jordan and Yemen's accession to the ECT this year –the first Arab country ECT members – is a substantial sign of progress. I profoundly welcome their participation in the ECT, and appreciate the efforts of the Secretariat as well as the other parties concerned. I expect both countries to make use of the legal infrastructure provided by the ECT, and to actively promote economic activities in the energy sector.

Japan continues to support the activities of the ECT and is willing to actively contribute to the modernisation of the ECT currently under discussion between the contracting parties.

Thank you for your attention.