

## " Japan's Lonely Battle for the Greenhouse Gas Reduction May Yield Reverse Effects

By **TAMAKI Hiroshi**

Amid the growing concern over the global warming, there is an urgent need for the entire world to advance a large scale reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs). Addressing this issue by setting a reduction goal of 50 percent or even more to be attained by 2050 is not only the responsibility of the current generation for the future generation, but also the requisite task to mitigate the damages of the global warming, which is steadily expanding during the lifetime of the current generation. However, it is quite another question whether it is advisable for Japan to announce to the world her intention to set a concrete, high reduction target, and make it an unconditional pledge to the international community.

"Every country should reduce the emission, so why not Japan takes the lead?" This is a lofty but naive assertion. If Japan should make an international pledge of setting a high mid-term target by 2020 and thereby legally obliged under a "protocol" to fulfill an exceptionally substantively high level duty of reduction, it would be detrimental not only to the Japanese economy, but also to enhancing the greenhouse gas reduction on a global scale. Because, if Japan set high level target of total national emissions as being discussed, the marginal abatement cost for Japan to take measures in this field would be so huge that the share (and its absolute amount) of the industries with high carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions would be more likely to be transferred to countries with less efficiency in reduction of greenhouse gases. It is required for Japan to continue to develop energy-saving technologies, with which to pursue economic and industrial activities, and it is also necessary for reducing efficiently the world's greenhouse gas emission.

And if Japan tries to achieve greenhouse gas reduction on a major scale, the estimated expenditure for it would be enormous (JPY190 trillion, according to estimates by the

Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan). It must be stupendously difficult for Japan to bear such a severe financial burden, which could not possibly be covered by the economic development in the environmental field. If present trend of emissions of the world continues, Japan's share of global GHGs emissions would go down to 3% and then to 2%, while the greenhouse gas emission of emerging countries will remain sky-rocketing. Therefore, even though Japan desperately strives to reduce the emission of GHGs, by losing the share of relatively energy-efficient productions, the total effect of the efforts against global warming in the world will be quite limited.

Unless all the major emitter countries in the world including, those not currently obliged to reduce emissions, are obliged such as US, and several major emitting developing countries (emerging countries), in a considerably equal way, to enhance the reduction, Japan's lonely battle for it, by setting an exceptionally high goal for reduction by herself, would not do good for the world eventually. Of course, it is quite right that Japan should make its utmost efforts to take measures against global warming. But this does not mean that the higher target of Japan is the better way to reduce total emission of the world. What we need is a calm, thoughtful and non-emotional discussion.

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