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United States' Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement

By FUNADA Hajime

On June 1 (early in the morning of June 2 Japan time) the U.S. President Donald Trump declared withdrawal of the U.S. from the Paris Agreement which deals with global warming prevention. He has been suggesting that the Agreement would be disadvantageous to the U.S. economy since the time of his presidential campaign. Now that the withdrawal has become reality, the international community was uniformly disappointed.

The Paris Agreement is a multilateral agreement adopted at the 21th meeting of the UN-led "Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP)" held in Paris two years ago. The first conference of this framework (COP1) held in Rio de Janeiro adopted "Rio Declaration on Environment and Development" and the third conference (COP3) held in Kyoto adopted "Kyoto Protocol," both considered as epoch-maker.

In the Paris Agreement, each signatory country has agreed to set its own goal for the reduction of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, to keep the increase in the average temperature below two degrees above pre-industrial levels and to achieve net zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050. It has now become clear that global warming may lead to a relative rise in sea levels, which causes submergence of coastlines, damages resulting from heavy rainfalls and drought, and amplification of typhoon and cyclones. Hence, global warming cannot be mitigated without joint efforts of every country.

Per annum CO₂ emissions of the U.S. accounts for 16%, coming second only to China. While the immediate impact of withdrawal of such a country would not be small, taking into account the fact that the former U.S. President Barack Obama had taken the initiative in defining the Agreement, the impact would be enormous. Besides, although the validity of the Agreement would remain intact, the withdrawal of the U.S. which originated the very idea of the Agreement may break the momentum of the collective efforts by other signatory countries. Although it is unlikely that the U.S. will reverse its decision, it would be quite meaningful if Japan, EU as well as China, the world's largest CO₂ emitter, would build a coalition against such negative posture towards global warming

mitigation.

(This is the English translation of an article written by FUNADA Hajime, Member of the House of Representatives (Liberal Democratic Party), which originally appeared on the e-forum "Hyakka-Seiho (Hundred Flowers in Full Bloom)" of JFIR on June 14, 2017.)