

Japan's outlook for G20

Ensuring sustainable growth amid demographic change

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Women 20 (W20) in March. The W20 is an engagement group with a mission to achieve gender equity, launched in 2015 during the G20 summit in Turkey. This year's W20 theme is Closing the Gender Gap for New Prosperity."

Tsukahara, who also serves as the executive director of the W20 Japan 2019 Steering Committee, said the Japanese organizers of the W20 hope to make a meaningful contribution, building on the discussion that had taken place at the previous W20 meeting in Argentina in October.

A gender mainstreaming strategy was stated in the G20 leaders' declaration document adopted at the Buenos Aires summit. Tsukahara praised this outcome as "significant progress." She argued, however, what has been discussed and accumulated at the W20 meetings over the past several years has not yet been incorporated into each country's policies, nor has it produced results.

"Unless we establish a mechanism to examine how proposals made through the W20 were implemented, and how we can push relevant parties to perform them if not conducted yet, it would be nothing but talk," she said. "Therefore, it's time to build such a framework."

Tsukahara continued: "When thinking about how Japan can contribute in a meaningful way, it would be to strengthen the governance of the W20. We'd like to strengthen its legitimacy."

"We have communicated with our counterparts in each country, and we have received their understanding (on this direction)."

She noted that Japan could fully exercise such an ability to craft a necessary management framework for the W20 as the government has already produced solid, workable plans and administrative programs based on relevant laws and rules.

"I believe we need to establish a feasible system in terms of operation and management, something sustainable, keeping the W20 running," Tsukahara said.

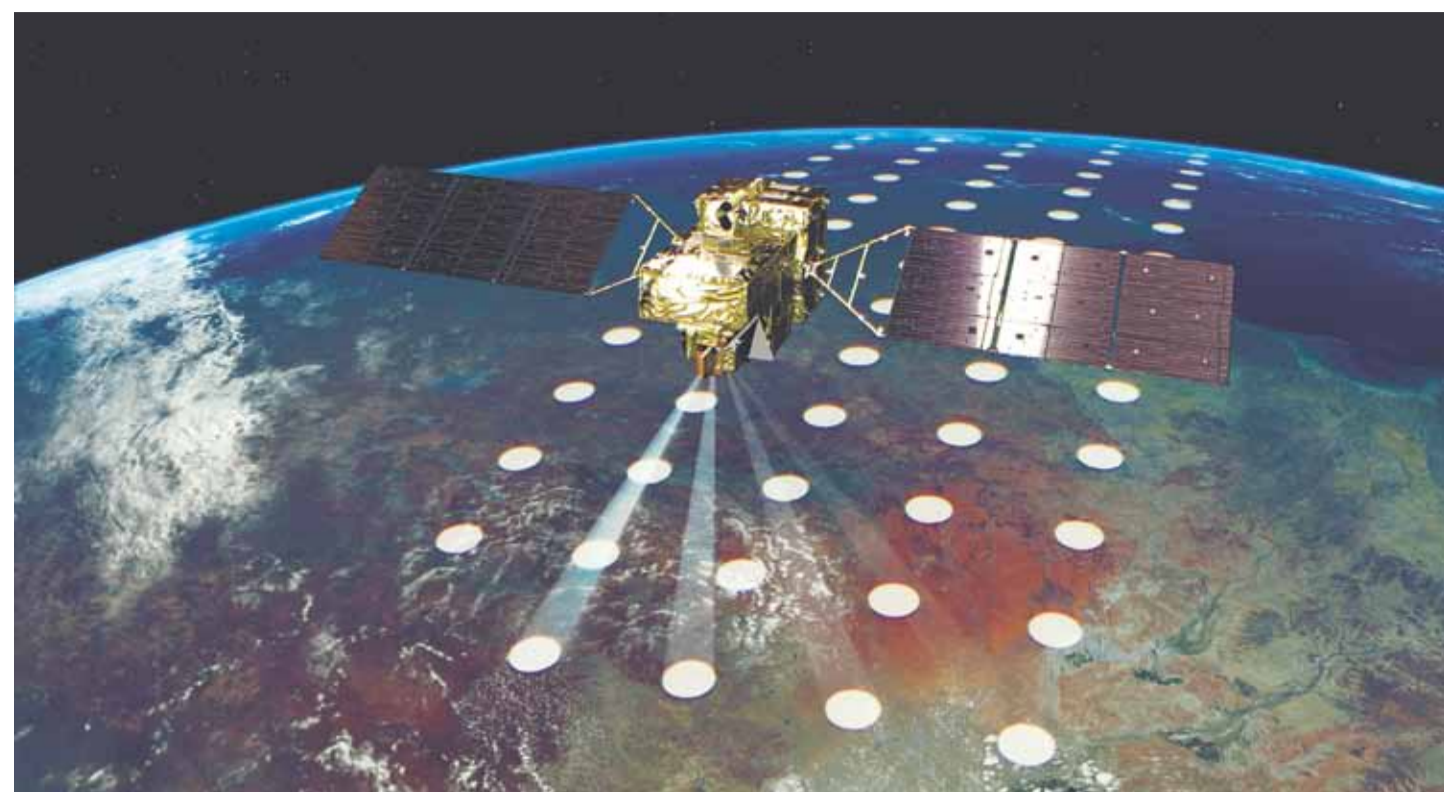
'Quality infrastructure'

Reliable and durable infrastructure is an indispensable social and economic foundation when enhancing connectivity to pursue economic prosperity and stability in any country.

Connectivity will be enhanced through quality infrastructure that is built and operated in accordance with international standards such as open access, transparency, economic efficiency in view of life cycle cost and fiscal soundness.

Under the G20 presidency this year, Japan will continue its efforts to elaborate an international standard of quality infrastructure shared by the G20 countries.

At the G7 Ise-Shima summit held in Mie Prefecture in 2016, leaders agreed to promote "strong, sustainable and balanced growth and to enhance resilience" through promoting



Left: Akiko Suzuki, director of public relations at the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, has been active for many years in promoting the full utilization of data obtained by the agency's satellites. Above: Greenhouse Gases Observing Satellite. JAXA

quality infrastructure investment.

Japan, under the "Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure" announced in May that year, pledged to provide financing of approximately \$200 billion for infrastructure projects across the world by 2021.

"Against the backdrop of growing global demand for infrastructure, promoting export of our country's quality infrastructure would serve as an essential element to our economic growth, but at the same time, it would seek to establish win-win relationships with partner countries through contributing to their development," Abe said in announcing the expanded initiative.

In order to enhance connectivity through quality infrastructure, Japan's partnership with other countries covers a wide range of sectors, including those of railways, airports and ports, energy and technical assistance in traffic and disaster management areas, among others.

For instance, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has helped infrastructure and economic development in Southeast Asia, through involvement in projects to improve the East-West Economic Corridor and the Southern Economic Corridor. These corridors are meant to encourage development and integration of the region.

The region-wide projects extend to a wide range of infrastructure in both corridors. They include the Hai Van Tunnel on Highway 1 in Vietnam, which is the longest tunnel in the region and part of the East-West Economic Corridor project. In Laos, JICA supported the project for the improvement of National Road No. 9, which is vital for socio-economic development in the country.

For the betterment of the Southern Economic Corridor, the organization assisted in the Laem Chabang Port construction project in Thailand, which is one of the largest ports in the country. Japan also supported the building of the Tsubasa Bridge ("tsubasa" meaning "wings" in Japanese) over the Mekong River in Cambodia, enabling Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand to be connected by a single road.

Seeking a virtuous cycle

With the continued pressure for economic and social demand to achieve improved quality of life, all nations regardless of their size or level of development must address global-scale issues in the energy and environmental fields.

Both economic development and environmental protection must be sought in a sustainable manner, with the help of private investment.

"In the field of energy and the environment, it is necessary for us to actively incorporate private investments in these fields and create a virtuous cycle for the environment and growth, rather than seeing it as two choices between environmental conservation and economic growth," the prime minister stressed at the closing of the G20 Buenos Aires summit in December.

"From those perspectives, I would like to hold constructive discussions on the contributions of the G20 on global issues, such as climate change and plastic waste in the oceans," Abe said.

Protecting the environment

Scorching summers, torrential rains and large typhoons — Japan is a country that has been hit by extreme weather in recent years that has brought severe damage. For Japan, climate change is not a distant threat.

To address climate change, the country has promoted efforts to shift to a decarbonized and circular society, while contributing to implement the Paris agreement, an international framework to combat global warming and climate change.

One of Japan's unique contributions is from outer space, thanks to undertakings by the Ministry of the Environment, the National Institute for Environmental Studies and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).

In October, Japan launched the second Greenhouse Gases Observing Satellite (GOSAT-2 or Ibuki-2), following the first

GOSAT (Ibuki) launched in January 2009, as the world's first satellite dedicated to monitoring greenhouse gases from outer space.

Precisely monitoring to understand the state of global warming, and observing the concentration, increase and decrease in such gases around the world are essential to promoting global warming countermeasures, according to JAXA.

JAXA explained that the aim of the satellite project is to contribute to the global effort toward prevention of warming, including monitoring greenhouse gas absorption and emissions.

GOSAT excels in collecting data across most of the globe accurately and uniformly as a single sensor takes measurements from outer space. Many countries are supplied with these measurements for free as fundamental data to study the actual state of the planet.

Since the launch of GOSAT in 2009, other countries and regions, including the U.S., Europe and China, launched their own observation satellites.

"Japanese technology keeps evolving through the development of observation satellites that get better at doing this. Going forward, we hope that we can contribute to a better world for all," said Akiko Suzuki, director of public relations at JAXA.

More active measures must be sought in tackling climate change and slow the pace of global warming. Energy conservation would help alleviate environmental burden, and Japanese companies have worked to develop new technologies and relevant products.

For instance, transparent solar panels have been developed that can double as glass while generating electricity so as to reduce energy use in buildings. In the housing sector, some residences are equipped with not only solar power generation facilities, but also lithium-ion batteries and energy storage systems equipped with such batteries provided by Japanese companies like Panasonic Corp. and Eliiy Power Co. to store energy both for daily use and emergencies.

Waste management efforts

Marine plastic waste has become a serious global issue that requires urgent international action. As an island nation, Japan has a direct stake in addressing the pollution.

Waste management also needs to be properly addressed, in terms of not only public health care, but also in preventing refuse



Japan has much to contribute in the environmental arena, including sharing technology related to renewable energy. GETTY IMAGES



An eco-friendly, biodegradable polyactic acid, which is decomposed by microorganisms found in soil, is under development by Japanese researchers. The bottles pictured represent various stages of the plant-based plastic's decomposition. From left — zero weeks, two weeks, four weeks and six weeks. JAPAN BIOPLASTICS ASSOCIATION

from polluting rivers and oceans. Japan has promoted reduce, reuse and recycle, and shared its knowledge and its best practices.

By applying advanced technologies, Japanese firms and research institutions have strengthened their efforts in addressing marine plastic waste. For instance, one company has developed a 100 percent plant-derived bioplastic, which decomposes biologically in seawater.

At the Japan-ASEAN summit held in Singapore in November, the prime minister pledged to strengthen cooperation with leaders from Southeast Asian nations that face similar environmental challenges. Abe said Japan would expand cooperation with ASEAN countries in combating marine plastic debris.

In a bid to help improve waste management, relevant Japanese parties have collaborated with their counterparts in other countries to come up with lasting solutions.

In Sri Lanka, developing sustainable, low-cost technology that effectively tackles the challenges of waste management has been a long-standing issue.

Experts from JICA and Japanese companies have worked to reduce environmental stress through appropriate waste management by creating guidelines — developed by researchers from both countries — for final disposal sites based on pollution control techniques for landfills.

Trial runs of the guidelines are underway under three local authorities. Japanese experts hope the implementation of guidelines will spread nationwide in Sri Lanka.

The Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka has enjoyed rapid economic growth in recent years but also faced serious waste issues due to the dramatic increase in its population. Despite increasing amounts of garbage, the amount of collected waste was very low. JICA and other Japanese parties have sup-

ported local efforts represented by the Clean Dhaka Project.

As a result, the amount of collected waste increased from 1,400 tons a day in 2003 to 3,400 tons a day in 2014, according to JICA. It also helped establish an organization to comprehensively engage in waste management.

In Palestinian territories, waste collection and transport is also a major issue and Japanese experts have been working to address the tasks with local counterparts.

In addition to grant aid projects for the provision of equipment, including garbage collection vehicles and containers, the technical cooperation projects have seen the launch of waste collection and transport services through the Joint Service Councils within the West Bank and Gaza Strip, according to JICA.

G20 summit in Osaka

As the host of the G20 Osaka summit, Japan is well-positioned to bolster international collaborative efforts to solve issues in the world. Despite the economic growth over the last few decades, the growing sense of marginalization from such growth could have an adverse effect toward continued pace of globalization.

As the global economy remains uncertain and challenges for global issues rise, world leaders are expected both at Davos and the G20 Osaka summit to present a viable vision and solutions.

With the world shifting focus toward Japan for its presidency of the G20 summit, the true challenge for the nation is how we can invite other partners — both governmental and non-governmental — to join forces and extend these positive contributions on a global scale.

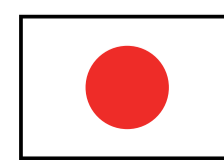
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Known for its history and unique cuisine, Osaka is ready to welcome those coming to the G20 summit in June.



Kaleidist K.K. President Tsukiko Tsukahara, who is serving as the executive director of the W20 Japan 2019 Steering Committee, stresses the importance of both diversity and inclusion. YOSHIAKI MIURA



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