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U.S.-Japan Global Forum Meeting on the Environment

9:00 ~ 17:00, April 14, 1992

Basic Stance of Japanese Industry (Keidanren)
on
Global Environmental Problems

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Global Environmental Problems

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Preface

This paper deals with Japanese industry's recent approaches to global environmental issues, giving some details of the Global Environment Charter which, laid down by the Federation of Economic Organizations (Keidanren) in April 1991, attracted much attention in various circles. It is hoped that this paper will be of some use in studying Japanese industry's basic stance on global environmental issues.

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1. Background of and Basic Stance on Establishment of Keidanren's Global Environment Charter

The "Global Environmental Charter" reflects the recent upsurge of political and economic concern about global environmental issues. With the understanding that "an aggressive attitude toward both economic growth and environmental protection is essential to future business activity," it shows major Japanese industries what they should do, from now on, in response to global environmental issues. Keidanren formulated this charter on April 23, 1991, urging all its affiliated companies to immediately translate it into practice.

However, this charter could not be established without many differences being smoothed out within the economic federation. There was a time when the development of heavy and chemical industries caused them to face social problems as their local environmental consequences, such as air pollution, took on such proportions that Japan was divided into an unfortunate confrontation between "corporations" and "citizens." Since then, as is commonly known, the government has taken a series of legal measures for environmental protection, with corporations fully prepared to comply with it.

However, there was something surprising about the arguments that arose before the Global Environment Charter was drawn up. It was once generally assumed that the Japanese economic community carried on its activities led by the government or the administration. Industrialists began arguing that it was time they should no longer simply follow in the footsteps of the authorities but they should also take the initiative in studying and implementing necessary measures before they were required to do so by government regulations. In other words, we were coming to the realization that Keidanren should set forth and carry out such goals as 'might make people think' that the economic community has changed. *—s.or in fact, econ community should*

But environmental issues today are so closely related with the ways of actual life that, despite their determination to take environmental control measures on their own not waiting for government regulations, private corporations cannot successfully cope with these problems simply by means of what they used at the time of pollution by industrial hazards. The water pollution of Tokyo Bay now is reported to be 70 percent due to household sewage. Air pollution by nitrogen oxide discharges from motor traffic and garbage disposal are also among the serious problems that have changed the quality of pollution from industrial hazards to urban and household hazards. Environmental issues have rapidly diversified and extended from local problems to cross-border, global ones, as acid rain, ozone layer depletion and

CO₂ emission problems are now so much to the fore.

Thus we are faced with global environmental issues which cannot be resolved if we go on putting the responsibility solely on the corporations, the government or the citizens. These are the kind of problems which cannot be solved unless tackled under a complex plural equation. The question is how we can collect ideas from all strata of society in an effort to find a solution for it. Neither of the citizens, the corporations or the government can stand aloof from the other if they are to live through the 21st century. Thinking for oneself, acting on one's own and "living together" is exactly what is needed for us to carve out our future. That is the conclusion reached in drawing up the Global Environment Charter.

So Keidanren regards the global environmental issues as the touchstone by which to see whether or not mankind can survive through the 21st century. It is no exaggeration, I would think, to say that we are now at the crossroads where co-existence or survival through the years into the 21st century is at stake for the corporations, the administration and the consumers.

2. Details of Global Environment Charter

The Global Environment Charter, worked out through the foregoing arguments, consists of a preamble, basic philosophy and 24-point action guidelines in 11 fields.

This section gives major details of the charter in the order mentioned above. What is set forth in its preamble may be summarized in three points. First, Japanese industry has come a long way toward the prevention of industrial hazards, as well as energy saving and resource conservation. But the task in the face of environmental issues in Japan now is to resolve public hazards from everyday life and city life. On the international front, environmental responses have to be considered from a global, instead of a national, point of view. In this context, the charter sets forth the determination of Keidanren members that they should not be satisfied with the solution of industrial pollution problems, but based on their experience in coping with these problems, they should take effective approaches to the more complex environmental issues we face now. In other words, an awakening to "international environmentalism" is called for to resolve international environmental issues in addition to domestic issues so far addressed on the principle of "national environmentalism."

Second, environmental issues today cannot be addressed correctly unless we review the existing socio-economic system in an effort to achieve a breakthrough in the development of new technology with the aim of building a type of society intended for environmental protection. As stated earlier in this paper, it is hardly feasible to clearly distinguish polluters from victims in environmental issues now, which cannot be solved by simply putting the whole responsibility on corporations and demanding them to take necessary steps as was once done in our society. A successful approach to these issues involves joint efforts of business corporations, consumers and the Japanese administration to take effective measures against essential factors of the problems, including a review on the existing social system. With such a setup of cooperation, we believe, industry members should make strenuous efforts for innovative technological development to achieve a technical breakthrough in coping with environmental issues.

Third, almost all environmental issues today, including garbage disposal and CO₂ emissions, can be attributed to our everyday life. What is expected of industrial circles now is that taking these circumstances into consideration, they will tackle environmental issues in a positive manner, beginning with whatever steps they can take immediately. This positive stance is essential for business corporations to gain people's cooperation and confidence in their activities. In the area of global warming problems, for instance, the causal relation between CO₂ emissions and global warming still remains unidentified in many respects, but this does not mean we are allowed to stand idle with folded arms. Industry members have to do their utmost to help facilitate surveys and studies on the cause of global warming, while making continued efforts for further energy and resources conservation which will lead to a reduction in CO₂ emissions.

As Mr. Gaishi Hiraiwa, chairman of Keidanren, says repeatedly, Japan's active approaches to global environmental issues may lead the international community to have a favorable, or rather less unfavorable, view of Japanese corporate activities which are often criticized as being devoted to economic growth. We are afraid that our idea of living together with society can hardly be realized unless we try to break away from our past practices. Furthermore, business corporations will have to build up an extensive network of cooperation with consumers, regional communities, the administrative authorities and academic circles through their persistent efforts to cope with a wide range of environmental problems. These efforts will give an extended scope for their business activities as well and, I believe, this way of reviewing the environmental control measures and business activities of corporations will lead to the development of a new type of culture and a new sense of values toward the 21st century.

Based on the three fundamental ideas summarized in the preamble, the basic philosophy of the charter emphasizes that it is essential for business corporations to actively tackle environmental issues in an attempt to develop a free, vigorous society while maintaining environmental protection.

Now let us briefly describe the charter's action guidelines covering 11 fields.

First, the Management Policy for Environmental Issues calls for corporations' efforts to ensure environmental protection and safety in all business activities. What is novel in the policy is its statement that careful consideration be given to ecosystems.

Second, the guideline on In-House Organization calls on member corporations to appoint officers and establish an organization for environmental control and to carry on internal auditing by laying down their individual bylaws concerning the environment. Goals in reducing the elements of environmental load were set from the standpoint of taking positive steps toward this end with adequate consideration given to those instances where such goals cannot be set forth in specific figures.

Third, the guideline on the Consideration of Environmental Impact calls on Keidanren members to assess environmental impacts at all stages of their business activities and to take necessary measures based on such assessment. The guideline also calls for effective utilization of resources and a reduction of wastes through recycling, for satisfactory management of pollutants and for proper disposal of wastes.

Fourth, the guideline on Technical Development provides that based on the importance of achieving a technical breakthrough noted in the preamble of the charter, research efforts be made to develop and introduce innovative technologies, products and services with the objective of solving environmental problems.

Fifth, the Technical Transfer guideline stipulates that all new technologies developed for environmental control purposes be transferred to interested parties both at home and abroad and that careful consideration be given to environmental control in carrying out official development assistance programs.

Sixth, the guideline on Emergency Measures says that if an environmental problem arises from an accident or some other contingency, information on the situation should be distributed widely among all interested parties while necessary steps should be taken to minimize the environmental load resulting

from the incident. Another positive stance reflected in the guideline is its statement that member corporations should actively participate in controlling disasters they are not responsible for, such as the environmental pollution resulting from the Persian Gulf War, by offering useful technologies and other services. At first, some argued that safety in factors and other facilities was not relevant to the purport of the charter. But since environmental and safety problems are often dealt with together in Western countries, we decided to include necessary safety provisions in the guideline in view of the need to take thoroughgoing voluntary steps for maintaining safety.

Seventh, the guideline on Public Relations and Enlightenment Activities calls for public information and enlightenment efforts concerning environmental protection measures taken in business activities, for in-house educational programs to help employees fully understand the importance of carefully managing their daily work, and for arrangements to provide satisfactory information for product users. Following this guideline, an increasing number of member corporations have recently come to prove environmental educational programs for their employees.

Eighth, the guideline on "Living Together with Society" provides that member corporations should participate in environmental protection activities as members of the local communities, support the voluntary participation of their employees in such activities and promote dialogues with all strata of society about various problems involved in business activities.

Ninth, the guideline on Overseas Operations states that corporations should take environmental implications into consideration when carrying on business activities abroad as well as when doing so at home. More specifically, the guideline calls on member corporations to comply with a 10-point program contained in the "Basic Position on Global Environmental Issues" published by Keidanren before the charter was finalized.

Tenth, the guideline on Contribution to Environmental Policy maintains that when the Japanese administrative authorities or international organizations are working on environmental policies, member corporations should provide these organizations with relevant information, participate in their discussions, and make proposals for environmental policy drafting and desirable consumer life styles.

Finally, the eleventh guideline which concerns Approaches to Global Warming calls on industry to offer assistance for research activities to find the causes of such global environmental problems and for economical analyses of measures proposed to cope with these problems, while actively taking its own

reasonable steps for such purposes as energy and resources conservation. In addition, industry is called on to cooperate with the authorities in coping with the poverty and population problems in developing countries through their activities in those areas of the problems where private corporations are expected to play an important role, particularly their direct investments abroad that will lead to increased employment and income-earning opportunities. (Attachment 1 - KEIDANREN Global Environment Charter)

3. Responses to Global Environment Charter and Future Tasks

As noted above, the Global Environment Charter calls for a review of the social system to find out what should be changed drastically to facilitate resolution of global environmental issues. I am convinced that the charter contains something that might be expected from industry as a voluntary step forward.

As it turned out, this attitude of the economic community gained social recognition. Soon after the charter was made public, it was played up in a big way by news media and received with an appreciative welcome by government officials. Incidentally it may be added that Mr. Maurice Strong, secretary general of the U.N. Conference on the Environment and Development, scheduled for Brazil in June this year, said he would like to use the Keidanren charter as a model case to be referred to in urging industrialists to grapple with environmental issues in their respective countries.

Of course, Keidanren is not satisfied with these reactions from inside Japan and out, but is prepared to follow up on the charter. For one thing, all 1,000 member companies and organizations of this federation are under examination as to how actually they are grappling with environmental issues.

We are also prepared to cooperate with developing countries in their efforts to ensure environmental protection, because we believe this is a task which Japanese industry has enough experience to carry out. So Keidanren has a task force for international environmental cooperation set up in the Environment Subcommittee on which I serve as chairman. The task force is called on to consider activities of international cooperation in promoting the transfer of environmental protection technologies to developing countries and in making arrangements for Debt for Nature Swaps. We are now discussing concrete measures to develop such activities.

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4. Cooperation with International Environmental NGOs

Furthermore, Keidanren sent its international environmental cooperation mission in February 1992 to Venezuela and the United States in order to look into how nature conservation efforts are actually being made in these countries. We had policy talks with people from leading American NGOs, such as The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Conservation International (CI), and we were deeply impressed by the way they were steadily implementing international nature conservation activities, making it a policy to reconcile corporate activities with environmental protection, based on ample financial foundations, with cooperation from many citizens and enterprises. A role these highly organized international environmental NGOs have to play seems to be of unfathomable significance in any attempt we will make at providing assistance to developing countries, which requires specialized capabilities and careful consideration, not bound by old traditions.

In Japan, meanwhile, there are a large number of ecological experts and environmental NGOs, each engaging in important activities. When it comes to specific cooperation in nature conservation efforts made in developing countries, however, these people and organizations are still far from being in a position to provide sufficiently organized cooperation.

Therefore, we in the Japanese industrial world believe that, when considering how economic activities should be developed from now on, it is of urgent necessity for businesses themselves to train internationally acceptable personnel who have capabilities of environmental impact assessment including ecological aspects. At the same time, we will have to encourage effective interactions between overseas NGOs and domestic human resources while promoting specific nature conservation projects. In the intermediate and distant futures, we will be required to build a structure that allows competent people to be active on the international stage. We consider it important to take even a step forward now in this direction.

Fortunately, there are indications that these international, environmental NGOs are ardently hoping to work together with the Japanese industry. For the present, however, we at Keidanren feel we should better avoid making any huge financial support hastily at a time. Rather, we think it important to ensure that people involved in business management will be more interested personally in nature conservation and that atmosphere will become rooted deeper in business operation to the extent that it will lead up to full commitment of Japanese industry to nature conservation in the medium and long terms.

Such being the case, our plans are to set about building a framework in which we will be able to provide cooperation to developing countries in their efforts to ~~conserve nature by establishing what is tentatively called the "Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund,"~~ starting for now with relatively small funds raised, tapping and supporting the initiative of our member corporations and individuals. As we will make any gradual progress in this effort, we are thinking of slowly expanding the scope and scale of activities under the Fund, while continuing studies of diverse ways of corporate or individual support and cooperation. (Attachment 2 - The KEIDANREN Nature Conservation Fund Initiative)

5. Ways Technological Transfer Should Be

Turning to the way technological transfer should be, there are three important factors that we think should be taken into consideration when we transfer technologies to developing countries. ~~These are technology, money and education.~~ Providing technological transfers without overloading recipient nations is one of the major responsibilities placed on the industries of advanced countries. In some cases, however, it is quite regrettable that because of these three elements taken up singly - or because of the lack of any one of these three - technologies transferred have been far from taking hold sufficiently in developing countries.

~~From now on, it is important to implement what may be called "organic" technological transfers by putting these three factors together. As a fundamental requisite to this way of technology transfer, it is of course necessary for developing countries themselves to give greater priority to environmental measures in the policy-making process as well.~~

Just like the global environment is shared by the peoples of the world, environmental technologies are the assets that should be shared by human beings. ~~Access to environmental technologies should essentially be given to any and all countries of the world accordingly.~~ As far as intellectual property rights are concerned, however, we believe these rights should be properly protected because they provide an incentive for technology development in the private sector, as well as a source of fair market competition and private-sector vitality.

Likewise, ~~gratuitous technology transfer by private enterprises may be possible as long as it is done temporarily and on a small scale, but if it continues for a certain period of time, then it should preferably be carried out on a commercial basis, with full consideration to the market mechanism.~~ To

make it possible, efforts should be directed toward institutional improvements, including ODA, at home and replenishment of international aid providing organizations, as well as toward improvement of the financing mechanism.

To make technological transfers effectively, we believe it is also necessary to provide better, more workable structures of international information exchange that could match technologies developing countries need with those industrialized nations can furnish, both in terms of hardware and software.

6. International Funding Mechanism

On the side of the international funding mechanism for implementing these measures, what is needed first of all is to ensure that purposes or uses of funds, scale, scope of coverage and bases of calculation are clear, and evaluation of effectiveness of measures envisaged, including cost-benefit analyses in a global sense, is possible.

In addition, financial assistance providing entities, or who is to provide financial aid and who will receive it, must be clarified. Particularly, what roles to be divided between or among countries, or what roles and positions to be taken by governments, international organizations and private entities should be made clear.

Equality of burdens should be secured among assisting countries, while independence of these countries regarding how they raise funds must also be valued. Given diversity of projects to cover, necessary funds should actually be collected from as many countries as possible and in smaller amounts they will be asked to shoulder. It may be worth noting here that Keidanren has proposed to achieve the 0.7% target in the ratio of ODA to GNP by the year 2000 ("How Economic Cooperation Should Be Toward International Contribution," Keidanren, March 24, 1992).

Yet another important consideration is to ensure that a proper combination of assistance with and without quid pro quo will be provided so as not to spoil self-supporting efforts of developing countries. Regarding projects that are to be supported, there also must be an adequate balance between development and environmental assistances.

Considering that there already exist a large number of international institutions providing financial assistance, efforts should be made to organically bring these institutions together to insure effective assistance. In operating international assisting organizations, the views of both donors and

beneficiaries should receive full attention.

7. Formulation of Action Program to Arrest Global Warming

Regarding global environmental problems in general and global warming in particular, one of the important issues is how we will be able to limit the emissions of carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas. With OECD member nations announcing their targets of stabilizing carbon dioxide emissions one after another, it is still fresh in our memory that Japan followed suit by declaring its own emission goal in the "Action Program to Arrest Global Warming" decided on at a Cabinet meeting in October 1990.

This Cabinet decision came amid diverse arguments not only within the government but in industrial circles as well. Needless to say, Japan is a resource-poor nation that relies on imports for most of its fossil fuel requirements. As such, our country has put much larger investments in energy-saving technology and equipment than any other industrialized countries since it experienced two oil crises. The result is that carbon dioxide emission levels Japan has achieved are nearly half those of other major industrialized nations both on the per capita and per GDP bases. Therefore, one of the views expressed at that time was that pushing further ahead with energy-saving measures should be a task to be undertaken by other advanced countries before Japan.

On the other hand, there were some who took a positive view of the move toward formulating the Action Program. Among them were that different starting points aside, it was now an international responsibility of industrialized countries, or the mission of those living on this planet, to work aggressively to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Or that for all notable achievements it so far reached in energy conservation, Japan as a nation dependent on imports for most of its primary energy needs should take this opportunity to push ahead with further improvements on the energy supply-demand structure and a change in social systems into energy-saving ones.

Taking these arguments into account, we in the Japanese industrial world conveyed our views to policy-makers through diverse channels. The result is that the Action Program to Arrest Global Warming finalized at a Cabinet meeting contains a package of measures designed to limit carbon dioxide emissions and enhance sinks absorbing this greenhouse gas, such as forests.

These measures include:

- a. Formation of urban and regional structures with low carbon dioxide emissions;
- b. Formation of transport systems with low carbon dioxide emissions;
- c. Formation of a production structure with low carbon dioxide emissions;
- d. Formation of an energy supply structure with low carbon dioxide emissions; and
- e. Realization of lifestyles with low carbon dioxide emissions.

And two of the steps prescribed for increasing carbon dioxide absorbing sources are:

- a. Adequate management of domestic forests and greens in urban areas; and
- b. Rational use of timber resources.

8. Japanese Industry's Stance Toward Global Environmental Problems

To achieve these policy aims decided by the government, there certainly exist some tasks that demand further efforts by industries affiliated with Keidanren, such as implementation of energy-saving actions of scale equivalent to those efforts we made to weather through the two oil crises, and development and exploitation of non-fossil energy sources of which nuclear power forms the core.

Yet, while basically committing ourselves to the accomplishment of this Action Program, we in the Japanese industrial circles are determined to continue doing everything we can to harmonize economic growth with environmental protection and securing of a stable supply of energy sources.

Expectations held both at home and abroad for our country to take the initiative in various aspects of environmental protection on the international stage are so great that a gap between what Japan is increasingly expected to do and what it will actually be able to do may likely lead up to some sort of discontent or criticism.

With this in mind, we consider it of vital importance, in the short term, to build a structure in which technologies accumulated and held by Japanese industry, including energy conservation techniques, renewable energy sources and efficient production processes, can be transferred to developing nations within the collaborative framework of the public and the private sector.

What may be yet another important task ahead of us is international cooperation in the development of innovative technologies that would lead the next generation, as envisaged in the "New Earth 21," an ambitious program proposed by the Japanese government, aiming to rejuvenate the Earth, which changed over the 200-year period since the Industrial Revolution, in about 100 years' time from now through technology development and transfer.

Furthermore, a task that demands our attention in the long term is to build new social systems covering various aspects, including industry, transportation, cities and living space. To accomplish tasks of this sort, we in the Japanese industrial world are prepared to take the lead in developing new ideas, among others.

What is essential to these activities is to make constant efforts, starting with what we can do immediately. As far as global environmental problems are concerned, any talks between or among countries must always be conducted carefully and thoroughly, whether the issue be related to financial resources or technology transfer. Yet we members of Japanese industry will not be permitted to just sit back and fold our arms until those discussions are over. Instead, while taking part in international debate, we must be prepared to do anything we can and should without the slightest hesitation. And by making more scientific, economic and intellectual contributions on a global scale, we want to see Japanese industry someday serving as an international information center on the environment and development. This is what we are aiming to achieve.

9. Japan-U.S. Partnership

In these circumstances what form of partnership should Japan and the United States conclude and develop with each other?

What comes to our mind first of all is that given the importance of technological transfer to developing nations as part of efforts to solve global environmental problems, it may be necessary for the two countries to play a central role in devoting some consideration, among other things, to ways of transferring state-of-the-art environmental technologies, as well as of

environmental education - training of maintenance engineers for environmental equipment - which is inseparably connected with transfer of such sophisticated technologies.

We have so far been positively committed to addressing the technological transfer issue in our own way. Still, the American people are more intensely interested in the whole aspects of nature conservation. There are many things we should learn from abundant experience America has gained in matters concerning nature conservation, such as approaches toward debt-for-nature swaps and NGOs active internationally for environmental preservation. We look forward, therefore, to having animated information exchanges with you.

Speaking of technology transfer, it generally tends to be taken as "transfer from developed to developing nations." By extending this notion further at this forum, we hope we will be able to take up other aspects, such as sharing and interchange of state-of-the-art technologies among industrialized countries.

One of the projects that may possibly take shape between Japan and the United States and as such, may be worth consideration, is, for example, to establish a joint research and development framework for such state-of-the-art technologies needed by the Japanese government's "New Earth 21" as cold fusion, carbon dioxide fixation, and photovoltaic power generation in space.

True, there exist some impediments in the way of concerted action by the two countries, such as differences in people's lifestyles, behavior patterns, and industrialists' investment intentions. None of these hurdles is impossible to clear, however. Rather, we are convinced that Japan and the United States both will be able to play a pioneer's role in establishing partnership among advanced countries of the world in terms of funding and institutions.

Now, in connection with technology transfer to developing countries, we sometimes feel that "other countries are taking advantage of the favor of our cooperation." It may be a kind of arrogance which makes us so feel toward other countries when we give them some of the advanced technologies we have developed. But acid rain and other environmental issues must be considered in the context of their far-reaching, cross-border consequences for countries around the world. Since we share the global environment with all other peoples of the world, we should make our international contributions based on understanding that we are working not for the interests of other nations but for our own. International contribution is now something that we do not just for the benefits of recipient nations but that we should do by all means in order to survive. Like it or not, now is the time for us to break down the walls of East-West and North-South issues and go hand in hand with all the peoples of the world to jointly open the door to the 21st century.

10. Conclusion

As society changes, so does a role businesses have to play. Private enterprises are needed to always behave accordingly. Needless to say, a role corporations should play under the free economy system is essentially to provide society with useful goods and services through fair competition and thereby pursue reasonable profits. Nevertheless, a role society requires of businesses is changing with changes in the social climate surrounding them, such as the necessity for coexistence of enterprises and consumers and the rapid progress of internationalization.

To put it another way, business enterprises are now expected to become entities useful for all members of society, serving people for their affluent life. Today, right at the time when aggressive responses to global environmental problems are looked for, it may well be said that a mission corporations should fulfil is getting far more important than ever before.

Environmental problems are quite complicated and diverse in fields with which they are concerned. The U.N.-sponsored Earth Summit due to take place in June 1992 is a forum designed to achieve a reconciliation of environment and development, aiming to reach international agreement on sustainable growth. The Action Plan "Agenda 21," which is to be agreed upon at the conference, includes a wide variety of measures not only for solving so-called environmental problems but for addressing population, poverty, education and other problems, thereby helping developing countries to achieve economic development. This notion of balancing development with the environment provides a fundamental perspective from which industry should look at global environmental problems in years ahead.

In closing, we shall gratefully appreciate your valuable advice and suggestions on a course of action for industry to take.