

Industries to Make “Utmost Effort” to Reduce CO2 Emissions by 20%

On October 11, a joint meeting was held by the Global Environment Subcommittee of the Industrial Structure Council under the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and the Global Environment Committee of the Central Environment Council under the Ministry of Environment. There, reports were presented on the follow-ups to the voluntary action plans being adopted by various industrial toward a revision of their targets to meet the CO2 emission reduction goals laid forth by the Kyoto Protocol. Besides nuclear energy, the industries represented at the meeting were steel, chemicals, petroleum, paper and cement, with each reporting on the state of its current measures to deal with global warming.

Representing the electric power industry was Vice-chairman Yoshihisa Morimoto of the Federation of Electric Power Companies (FEPC), who delivered a report on the current status of work on the Kashiwazaki Kariwa Nuclear Power Station (NPS) of the Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO), which has been shut down since being struck by the Niigata-Chuetsu Offshore Earthquake three months ago. Although the related parties have been doing their best to make detailed investigations and inspections of the facilities, Morimoto said that “no conclusions could be reached” at the current point in time concerning a possible date for the resumption of operations.

Nonetheless, he emphasized that utmost efforts would still be made to effect a 20% reduction in the amount of CO2 emissions from their FY1990 levels, in line with existing plans. Specifically, the amount of CO2 emission per kWh produced are to be reduced from the 0.417kg level of FY1990 to 0.34kg for the average level of FY2008-2012 (corresponding to the first phase of the Kyoto targets). Formerly, the goal had been to achieve that reduction by FY2010. In FY2006, Japan's per-kWh CO2 emission levels were 0.41kg, only slightly less than the FY1990 figure.

On the side of electric power supply, FEPC's Morimoto pointed out three broad actions to be taken: (1) promoting nuclear energy, premised on safety and the restoration of credibility, so as to reduce the unit emissions of CO2 by 2-3%; (2) improving the thermal efficiency of thermal power plants, as well as the management of thermal power sources, reducing unit CO2 emissions by 1% or so; and (3) having electric utilities take international approaches to the problem, reducing unit CO2 emissions by 5-6%.

As far as the first item is concerned, the capacity factor of nuclear power plants would be increased by improving periodic inspections, introducing on-line maintenance, and power uprate. As far as international approaches are concerned, Kyoto Mechanisms (which enable countries to access cost-effective opportunities to reduce emissions, or to remove carbon from the atmosphere, in other countries) and the World Bank Carbon Fund, etc., would be utilized to bring about an expected reduction in CO2 emissions of 120 million tons by 2012, up significantly from the mere 3,000-ton reduction expected by 2010.

In addition, he called for people on the demand side of the equation to actively work toward reducing CO2 emissions, in addition to the efforts by electric utilities. That would be brought about by a general conversion of Japan's society to an “energy-conserving, low-carbon-emitting” society.

At the meeting, Yumi Akimoto, Vice-chairman of the Japan Atomic Industrial Forum (JAIF), said, “Nuclear power has a great potential to suppress CO2 emissions.” He called for the early resumption of operations at the Kashiwazaki Kariwa NPS.

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