

Japan submits unchanged national climate plan, lowers the bar for other big emitters

March 31 2020



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As part of the Paris Agreement countries must submit revised national climate plans in five year cycles. According to the agreement, countries should submit a second round of plans (or Nationally Determined Contributions—NDCs) in 2020 to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

In 2015, 184 countries submitted national climate plans. This first round of plans put the world on a path to warm by 3°C or more. Now, there is an urgency for these second round of plans to have enhanced ambition if

we are to have a chance of keeping to the 1.5°C global temperature goal set out in the Paris Agreement—and what the science assessed by the IPCC is shown to be safer for people and nature compared with 2°C or more warming. So far, 107 countries have indicated they will submit enhanced plans in 2020. The Marshall Islands, Suriname, Norway and Moldova have so far submitted their second round plans, all enhancing their ambition. Japan is the first of the big emitting countries to submit its plan and it is unchanged from its first submission.

Responding to the news, Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, leader of WWF's [global climate](#) and energy practice said: "It is deeply disappointing that Japan, as the world's third largest economy and the world's fifth largest emitter of greenhouse gases, could not find the political will to step up its climate actions in submitting its second national climate plan to the United Nations. Instead of setting the pace, they have lowered the bar.

"A true test of a country's commitment to the Paris Agreement is whether their second round plans will be aligned to 1.5°C. We have known since 2015 that the first round of plans was setting the world on a path to warm by 3°C or more.

"Japan has wasted an opportunity to show climate leadership. They have failed their citizens and the people of the world by rushing to submit their NDC without substantial improvements.

"The signal sent by this submission is that Japan is not willing to tackle the climate crisis meaningfully. What they have submitted is an affront to their previous climate leadership and to what we all know science says needs to be done. It is particularly galling since Japan is the first of the big emitters to submit their national climate plans.

"We urge all big emitting countries to submit revised plans aligned with 1.5°C. The current health crisis facing the world is giving us a glimpse

into what is possible when governments have the political will to take action—and greening recovery and stimulus efforts aligned to sustainable development is necessary and desirable.

"Humans need to better understand and respect that ecosystems are the cradle of our lives, livelihoods and security. There are a number of trends that have led to increasing frequency of certain disease outbreaks, but science shows that [climate change](#) and biodiversity loss are contributing factors.

"Climate change remains a massive and very foreseeable crisis that is already unfolding at a (scientific) pace unprecedented in human history. We need all tools at our disposal to take action. Being cross-sectoral in nature, national climate plans give us one of the best opportunities to shift towards a more resilient economic development."

Naoyuki Yamagishi, leader of the climate and energy group for WWF-Japan said: "Japan missed another opportunity to show leadership for decarbonization. Instead it sent a completely wrong signal to the international society implying it is ok not to enhance ambition at this crucial moment. No, this is NOT OK in the face of a [climate](#) crisis.

"Submitting an unchanged Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) now for the sake of meeting the nine- to 12-month deadline has no legal basis and possibly discourages other countries efforts to seriously consider enhancing NDCs.

"Japan's government should have listened to the positive voices expressed in the statement by Japan Climate Initiative (JCI), which was signed by 248 organizations including business companies, [local governments](#) and other organizations who urged the government to enhance its NDC.

"The only possible remedy now is to start an open and transparent process to discuss how to (NOT whether to) enhance its NDC with a clear time schedule."

Provided by WWF

Citation: Japan submits unchanged national climate plan, lowers the bar for other big emitters (2020, March 31) retrieved 12 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-03-japan-submits-unchanged-national-climate.html>

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