



## Statement Concerning the Post-COVID-19 Society

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Change Our Next Decade (COND)

Commission on Policy Advocacy

Given that the current and serious spread of the coronavirus, as youth involved in biodiversity and the conservation of the natural environment, we have used this period to consider how mankind and nature need to coexist in the “post coronavirus society”. The coronavirus has highlighted the challenges of wildlife trade and provided an opportunity to reconsider the relationship between biodiversity and infectious diseases. In addition, it has a great influence on people and economic activities in various parts of the world, and it is pressing for us to create a new lifestyle for our future. On the other hand, there are also reports that the condition of the natural environment has recovered and improved due to the decrease in the number of tourists visiting tourist spots. In this way, the pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to reconsider the relationship between humans and nature.

With this transition period, we believe that there are things that need to be reconsidered, improved, and newly promoted. The four things we have considered are:

- I. The need for a green recovery
  - II. The maintenance of mental health through the utilization of natural environment's with biodiversity
  - III. Promoting the creation of places for conservation activities with remote working
  - IV. Comprehensive support for conservation activities in Geo-park/Eco-parks
- I . The need for a green recovery

2020 was planned to be a “Biodiversity Super Year”. However, due to the unexpected spread of the coronavirus, it has been affecting various plans such as the postponement of the Convention on Biological Diversity COP15. Under these circumstances, what the youth demand in for the future is a "carbon-free, sustainable, and resilient society", and we are looking for an essential way of life rather than short-term convenience. We must "redirect the flow" to a better direction, not to "return" to the society before the spread of the virus and for that reason, the concept of "green recovery" is necessary.

Economic stimulus measures will be implemented due to the stagnation of economic activities from the pandemic. We cannot overlook the potential that this stimulus package may create a second health crisis-prone society. Economic stimulus measures must be

"consistent with climate change and biodiversity" and call for a shift from gray to a green society. The spread of the coronavirus is an opportunity from this perspective.

In fact, in the EU, the movement toward green recovery centering on the green deal is becoming more active. Japan should clarify how it will respond to such movements. As an economic measure, it is essential that the government does not recommend the development of new entertainment facilities in anticipation of increased demand from self-isolation and prevent the development of renewable energy with large-scale natural destruction. We should stop loosening regulations for development and making ad hoc recovery measures in the event of disasters. Aiming for a carbon-free society that does not rely on development can be said to be the first step toward a society that coexists with nature.

On May 22, 2020, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry announced the "Circular Economy Vision 2020". It is considered essential to strengthen the cooperation among ministries and agencies, and to set common indicators for a circular society.

## II. The maintenance of mental health through the utilization of natural environment's with biodiversity

Due to the long-term refraining from going out and the restriction of behavior in response to the coronavirus, it is regarded that the increasing number of people whose mental health is being affected is an issue. It has been proved by various studies that contact with nature contributes to the maintenance and improvement of human mental health, and it is also recommended as a mental health measure when social distancing. Therefore, in the post-coronavirus society, we demand the maintenance and promotion of "mental health" by conserving and utilizing the natural environment with biodiversity.

- ① Through the cooperation among related ministries and agencies, widely publicize that biodiversity conservation is useful for maintaining and promoting "mental health" and clearly state it as one of the mental health measures.
- ② Amend laws and implement legislation to oblige green spaces with biodiversity useful for maintaining "mental health" to be on or near business sites.
- ③ Make the establishment of a biodiverse parks that are accessible to people of all ages (even for young people) and is highly effective in maintaining mental health an obligation

When it comes to creating a green space and layout plans for planting greenery, it is necessary not only to maintain the hard aspects, but also to design from the perspective

of the people who use the venue, based on the advice of experts. Simply increasing the amount of green space is no different from conventional urban greening, and in order to devise a green space that is healthy for both living organisms and humans, not only the amount of green but also the quality of green and the conservation of it matter.

As youth who will continue living farther in the future, we demand the creation of a "society in a better condition than we are now" and live without despair and with hope for the future. Among these, maintaining and promoting mental health, which has not been focused so far, is one of the issues that cannot be ignored in Japan, which has a top suicide rate among developed countries. We require the promotion of the conservation and utilization of the biodiverse natural environment we have.

The following three points can be cited as the advantages of maintaining and promoting mental health by conserving and utilizing the biodiverse natural environment.

(1) It is extremely important to support the mental health of the younger generation, and by creating a natural environment in which "mental health" can be maintained unconsciously, mental health can be maintained and improved whilst also preventing the separation between youth with the natural environment that has been becoming an issue in recent times.

(2) Since there are green spaces that contribute to the maintenance of "mental health" not only in the place of residence but also in the area of work, the "young generation", who have reached a working-age can maintain their mental health whilst continuing their work.

(3) From a public health perspective, by recognizing "the importance of biodiversity and natural environment conservation" as a society, the priority and value of environmental conservation activities will increase. By doing so, we believe that it will be easier to support activities related to the conservation of the natural environment and biodiversity due to willing and motivated youth.

### III. Promoting the creation of places for conservation activities with remote working

"Investigation of NPO activities and work styles (group/individual survey)-with consideration of the Great East Japan Earthquake reconstruction assistance activities-" by the Japan Institute for Labor Policy and Training show that the annual salary for the "average person" is 2,604,000 yen, for "higher paid people" it is 3,726,000 yen, and "lower paid people" it is 2,191,000 yen. It reports that the wages of the "average person" of regular NPO corporations at present are around 700,000 to 800,000 yen lower than that of general corporations. In addition, even for the "higher paid people" in NPOs, it is only about 300,000-400,000 yen higher than that of a general company, which is

significantly lower than that of a person who has a high salary in a general corporation. In addition, the benefits are inferior to ordinary companies.

Given these circumstances, employment at NPOs and other organizations involved in nature conservation is a risky option for youth. However, due to the spread of COVID-19, there are signs that the way people work will change in various industries. For example, the adoption of remote work has accelerated in many industries. In the future, with the spread of remote work, it is expected that there will be more opportunities to engage in nature conservation activities as a side job or as a volunteer, even if they have their own jobs in other industries. This means that it will become possible to live a lifestyle where you can make a living through remote work while moving to a rural area and taking part in conservation activities.

By establishing a lifestyle that utilizes remote work, it is possible to meet the demand of youth who desire environmental conservation activities rooted in the region and solve both the shortage of human resources, which is a problem at NPOs. In fact, in the 2017 “Survey on Specified Non-Profit Organizations” by the Cabinet Office, it was reported that the most concerned issue for NPOs was securing human resources and education. There is a strong anticipation from the youth that the government will be able to create new and flexible ways of working, and will be able to create a mechanism and financial support that will enable them to engage in nature conservation activities alongside a side job or as a volunteer activity.

During the press conference by Environment Minister Koizumi on April 10, 2020, there was a comment regarding a new way of working centered on maintaining and securing employment in national parks. We support this minister's response and look forward to realizing it as soon as possible. In 2018, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, efforts are being made to balance work style reform and CO2 reduction. In addition to CO2 reduction, now is the time to promote youth participation in natural environment conservation activities.

#### IV. Comprehensive support for conservation activities in Geo-park/Eco-parks

We request the establishment and implementation of satoyama/satoumi model cases that incorporate a framework for conserving specific regions throughout the country, such as geoparks and eco-parks, into the regional symbiotic sphere, and encourage the revitalization of connection between ministries and local governments in terms of environmental education and regional revitalization.

Currently, COVID-19 is reducing the productivity of regions. Since the response to the virus is not catching up even in urban areas, it is desirable to promote measures for youth

to migrate to these regions medium to long term by creating a sustainable satoyama and satoumi and establishing a work-life balance.

At the same time, the utilization of groups in the region in the form of implementing sustainable urban development and infrastructure management can be presented by youth as a resource of "human infrastructure development", and the continuous support for activities is a resource for youth adapting to remote work.

In addition, by supporting the creation of a regional network connected to the whole country centered on the region's preparation for a new epidemic or natural disaster, it is possible to contribute to the conservation of ecosystems in a wider area as well as a response to an epidemic or disaster .

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