

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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# JAPAN: COMMIT TO PHASING OUT FOSSIL FUELS IMMEDIATELY FOR CARBON NEUTRALITY TARGET TO BE HUMAN RIGHTS-COMPLIANT

Japan's new Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga announced the nation's long-term carbon neutrality target in his policy speech on October 26th. This is a step in the right direction from the world's third largest economy. However, a target of net-zero by 2050 is not adequate to meet Japan's human rights obligations related to climate change.

The IPCC estimates that the carbon budget associated with 1.5 °C degrees of global warming will be exhausted by 2028 if emissions remain on the current levels. But it also points out that it is feasible to contain this: this will require states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% globally from 2010 levels by 2030.

However, it would be unreasonable to demand that developing countries make this transition at the same pace as developed countries. Wealthy industrialized countries like Japan which currently emit approximately one third of global emissions, cumulatively, and that have greater resources and technological capacity, should move to zero carbon emissions by 2030 or as soon as possible after that. Reaching carbon neutrality only by 2050 would put an excessive burden on developing countries and is not likely to be enough to avoid the worst human rights impacts of the climate crisis, some of which are already being felt across the world, including in Japan. In 2018, Japan was ranked the country most impacted by extreme weather events, after flash floods and a severe heatwave claimed hundreds of lives. As is the case for all other wealthy countries with a historical responsibility for emissions, Japan should reach zero emissions by 2030 or as soon as possible after that.

A major omission in the announcement was reference to phasing out fossil fuels. While PM Suga, in his speech, voiced an important commitment to "fundamentally shift longstanding policy on coal-power generation", his pledge did not mention a phase-out date for coal, oil or gas, which continue to occupy a significant share in the country's current energy mix. Measures to avoid and reduce emissions, including by phasing out fossil fuels, should be prioritised over reliance on the use of mechanisms such as carbon removal and capture which purport to be aimed at achieving negative emissions, but which are still unproven and have the potential to jeopardise the enjoyment of human rights for millions of people in the short term. For instance, biofuels with carbon capture and storage systems (BECCS) require huge amounts of land and water, with the likelihood of accompanying forced evictions, food and water shortages and price increases, among other pitfalls.

Under the Paris Agreement, states are obliged to submit enhanced emission reduction pledges by 31 December 2020, which Japan has not yet done. Less than a handful of wealthy countries have submitted more ambitious pledges, with the end of the year fast approaching. According to the UN Environment Programme, current emission targets are a fifth of what is needed to contain warming to a 1.5 °C target.

Amnesty International urges Japanese authorities to translate the strong intent signalled by them into higher ambition, not just in the long, but also the short and medium term. In this regard, Japan must submit a revised, more ambitious emission reductions target for 2030 under the Paris Agreement as soon as possible with a clear phase-out date for fossil fuels, as its current targets are highly incompatible with the imperative of limiting global warming to under 1.5 °C. This should also reflect in Japan immediately ceasing to finance fossil fuel projects overseas without exception. It must clarify and announce a time-bound commitment to begin phasing out coal as soon as possible towards a 2030 coal-free target and ensure this commitment is embedded in the country's next energy plan, set to be announced mid-2021. In parallel, Japan should also ensure the shift towards a zero-carbon economy and a more resilient society is just and fair for all, in line with states' human rights obligations and creates opportunities to reduce inequality, ensure a just transition for workers and communities impacted by shift from a fossil fuel economy, combat discrimination, promote gender, class and intergenerational justice and fulfil human rights.