

Statement by Civil Society Organizations from the Ise Shima Region  
on  
Regional Disparity

To the assembled leaders of the Group of Seven (G7):

We, representatives of civil society in the region hosting the G7 Ise Shima Summit, are deeply aware of connections between global and local issues. We hereby state our position as adopted at the Ise Shima Civil Society Summit on 24 May 2016, and call on the assembled leaders to act urgently to rectify current international and domestic regional disparities.

Rapid Implementation of Policies to Rectify Regional Disparities

1. Situation of Rural and Urban Regions in Japan

In agricultural, fishing, and forestry regions of Japan, many villages are facing the threat of extinction. In Japan, primary industries can no longer thrive. Consumers now demand low price, efficiency, and economy, and that demand is met by products from overseas. Farming, forestry and fishing industries have further declined as few young people take up these professions, instead moving to urban areas in search of employment. In terms of Japan's river basin geography, the upland level has become degraded, and outlying villages are on the verge of dying out. As a result, upland forests have lost their capacity for watershed cultivation and flood prevention, causing flooding and other negative effects on life in the mid and lower levels and altering river delta ecosystems.

Meanwhile, due to over-industrialization, urban environments are being polluted and destroyed. Urban communities are disintegrating; many urban dwellers do not know what their neighbors look like. Further, urbanites suffer from the stress of overwork and lack of communication. Further, as the urban employment structure has become fluid and insecure, poverty and inequality have intensified.

2. Regional Disparity on a Global Scale

Most industrialized countries, including Japan, import overseas resources for low cost and efficiency. In particular, they depend on resources from developing countries. This dependence, and the current

trends of foreign investment to maintain cheap overseas supply, negatively impacts developing countries. Labor migrants in developing countries face low wages and severe working conditions, and buyers control the markets, keeping product prices low, and maintaining global inequality. Finances from ODA (our tax money) and private investment indirectly support the global economic system, and further aggravate these North-South problems. Meanwhile, in industrialized countries, as in Japan, primary industries are in decline, leaving many people jobless.

Thus, these serious problems mutually link and connect urban and rural areas, and developed and developing nations.

### 3. Causes and Solutions

Regional disparities arise when one side decides the rules of interaction and imposes them on the other side. In pursuit of the low cost, efficiency, and economy demanded by urban and developed country markets, the resources of rural areas and developing countries are overexploited. At the same time, the residents of urban areas and developed countries are also exhausted by their untenable lifestyle.

To change this negative cycle, we need to change the exploitative structure of excessive mutual dependence and reestablish an appropriate level of interdependence and regional autonomy. Each region has its own resources. The citizens of each region must build sustainable societies using the local resources of their own region. In Japan's case, this means establishing a sustainable eco-social system for each river basin area. Each level of the river basin system has its own resources; circulating those resources within the river basin area would facilitate sustainable and peaceful regional development without external plundering.

Various sustainable grassroots alternatives are gaining popularity: fair finance, fair trade, ethical production and local consumption all offer ways to prevent social and ecological problems. This trend towards conscious consumption supports efforts to redress regional disparities.

### 4. From the Perspective of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The 10<sup>th</sup> SDG is to "Reduce inequality within and among countries." As this goal implies, the issue of global disparities must be addressed at the level of the society as a whole. Poverty and hunger are concentrated in developing countries. However, regional disparities of education and gender equality; partly due to conventional customs and beliefs, some children cannot attend school, and

there are few female elected officials in many regions. Local autonomy is necessary to address such non-economic regional disparities too.

## 5. What We Can Do (Citizens' Declaration)

Based on the above understanding of current regional disparities, we representatives of civil society in the Ise Shima region, pledge to undertake the following actions:

- i. Support development with concern for the pre-existing ecologically sound economy of each region;
- ii. Live with a conscious vision of how our lifestyles affect resources, and to raise our voices in managing local resources, supplemented by resources from other regions;
- iii. Build autonomous regions, so that all people wherever they are born and raised can live in peace and true wealth, without victimizing others through exploitative structures.

## 6. Call to Action to Leaders of the G7 Nations

We call on all governments of the G7 nations, and particularly the government of the host nation, Japan, to take the following steps to achieve the vision of the citizens' declaration.

- i. Reconsider and avoid hasty ratification of multilateral trade treaties such as the TTP, TTIP, and TiSA that promote further economic globalization.
- ii. Rectify the problems of overseas investment, promote fair finance and work towards introducing a global solidarity tax.
- iii. Address problems stemming from current north-south inequalities, adopt policies to effectively promote sustainable local economies and fair trade between local economies.
- iv. Raising energy self-sufficiency on a river basin (or similar area) level would reduce wasteful production and consumption of energy, reduce the environmental burden, and promote both local employment and effective use of local resources. To achieve these goals, set energy policies that plan withdrawal from nuclear and fossil fuels and a shift to local production and

consumption.

- v. To achieve local and regional self-reliance, plan for locally-based governance and education. Change the structure of local government administration to allow it to fully reflect the will of local citizens. In the field of education, revamp schooling and school curricula to promote human resources for the local region, and build a system that encourages the direct participation of community members.
  
- vi. Address gender imbalances on a local level, according to the local situation. In particular, promote women's equal access to paid work and end gender-based discrimination. Also take steps to ensure women's political participation, such as by establishing a quota for women's seats in local government.

■ respectfully

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- NPO Senkyo Tarui
- Anti-war Network
- Civic Institute for Civil Society
- MIE NPO Network Center
- Association of Yokkaichi NPOs
- Universal Working Center
- Asian Health Institute
- Nagoya NGO Center
- Students for a Free Tibet Japan Mie chapter
- Africa Japan Forum
- Work Style Design
- Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability
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