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Civil society slams Japan for slashing mitigation target

Warsaw, Poland (PANA) - The civil society at the UN Climate Conference taking place in Warsaw, Poland, has slammed Japans decision to slash its greenhouse gas emission target.

PANA reports that the announcement by the Japanese government to downgrade its greenhouse gas emissions by 3.8 percent from their 2005 level by 2020 has attracted wide criticism here.

The announcement comes in the first week of the UN Climate Change conference, where negotiations are setting up a clear process that will result in an ambitious new global deal to be adopted in 2015 in Paris to avoid catastrophic climate impacts.

"Today, the Japanese government announced that it aims for a 3.8 percent greenhouse gas emissions reduction compared to 2005. However, according to the Kyoto baseline in 1990, this is a 3.1 percent increase. Prime Minister Abe is tricking the world and the Japanese people, Hisayo Takada, Climate Energy Campaigner for Greenpeace Japan, said in Warsaw, Friday.

The International Energy Agency, the World Bank and the IPCC agree that we must leave the vast majority of fossil fuels in the ground. It is the only way to avoid catastrophic climate impacts.

"Not only is the weakening of its greenhouse gas emissions cuts heading in the wrong direction, announcing the downgrade in ambition now is highly destructive to the Climate Talks. We have already seen a chilling effect on the negotiations in anticipation of this announcement, added Martin Kaiser, head of the Greenpeace delegation in Warsaw.

According to Greenpeace, the downgraded target is based on the assumption that no nuclear power plants will resume operations. However, the government will likely increase the target if those plants come back online.

All nuclear power plants were shut down for safety reasons in the wake of the Fukushima disaster in 2011. A Greenpeace study says Japan can achieve emission cuts of more than 20 percent without relying on its nuclear energy sector.

Nuclear energy cannot be a solution for climate change. It is too dangerous, too expensive and too late. Japan learned a dire lesson about this recently. Greenpeace has shown that Japan can get dramatic emission reductions while shutting down nuclear entirely, which the Japanese government is not even planning to do, Takada said.

The 'increased' target may sound good for some Japanese industries, but it will be a nightmare for the rest of the Japanese people. We do not want any more disasters, especially if it can be avoided by a political decision," Takada added.

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