

Youth/Mayors Dialogue at the European Union Delegation, Tokyo

June 7, 2023, Report by Marjan

Introduction:

The successful Youth/mayors dialogue was co-organized and implemented by the GCoM Japan Secretariat and the European Union Delegation (EUD) on June 7th, 2023 at the EUD auditorium in Tokyo. Although this event was the first of its kind, it was very successful and planned to be repeated at least once a year.

The Ambassador of the EUD to Japan, representatives from Japan's Ministry of Environment, 8 Japanese city Mayors (Tomiya, Usa, Yamagata, Kushima, Tokorozawa, Yosano, Yoichi, and Niseko) and working-level officials of these local governments, 8 speakers representing the following organisations G7/G20 Youth Japan, Climate Youth Japan, Change Our Next Decade, Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability, Nagoya University, independent activists, as well as other youth observers associated with these networks participated in the dialogue.

The aim was to discuss opportunities, challenges and provide recommendations on ways to make climate and sustainability policies and actions participatory and more inclusive at local level. The intergenerational aspect of climate and sustainability policies needs to be reflected in strong meaningful youth engagement at all stages of decision-making processes. The dialogue backbone was based on two main panels:

1. Mobility and Energy Transition
2. Adaptation, Advocacy, and Biodiversity

In each of these panels, first, youth speakers talked about the issues concerning the theme of the session and raised questions that later were discussed by mayors, the EU Ambassador, and the representative of Japan's Ministry of Environment. Every speech and discussion were recorded graphically. The following is a summary of the discussed issues.



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Opening:

Ambassador Paquet (EUD):

EU Ambassador Paquet opened the event by showing his excitement and enthusiasm about the dialogue. He talked about the undergoing city-level transformations in Europe for addressing the multifaceted challenge of climate change; the so-called "cities' mission" seeking climate neutrality by 2030. Ambassador pointed out the efforts of 100 European cities deeply transforming their energy, food, mobility, waste management, and nearby industries by connecting technology and research to empower cities and communities. By 2030, many cities are expected to achieve their goals, inspiring others and leading to a substantial reduction in CO2 emissions for Europe. Mr. Paquet elaborated on the importance of city administrations with citizens to develop and implement plans, ensuring meaningful impact driven by the population. At the end of his opening remarks, Ambassador highlighted the significance of this mission in Europe and potential usefulness in Japan, making his participation in the session exciting as he could learn about ongoing city developments and the expectations of young Japanese for faster change.



Marjan (Moderator, GCoM Japan):



Following the opening remarks, the moderator (Ms. Marjan from the GCoM Japan Secretariat) started panel 1: Mobility and Energy Transition. In the following, you may find a brief overview of what the four Youth speakers of this panel talked about and what questions they raised for the discussion part with the mayors, EU Ambassador and the representative of Japan's Ministry of Environment. Due to time limitations, we asked all speakers to limit their speech/comment time to a maximum of three minutes and (special thanks to Yoshihiro, our time-keeper, a student from Nagoya University).

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Panel 1: Mobility and Energy Transition

Speakers:

(Name of the speaker is confidential) (G7/G20 Youth Japan):

The balance between the 3 Es (Environment, Economy, and Energy Security) is crucial for all countries globally. Mobility requires a delicate equilibrium of economic and environmental considerations. Developing countries benefit from subsidies to encourage EV adoption, while developed nations face challenges with charging infrastructure in rural areas. Japan's mountainous landscape presents obstacles for solar energy generation compared to European countries. Realistic decarbonization policies are necessary, and developed nations should support developing countries. I have three questions, but I will propose one of them:

- Please tell us what you are doing and what you feel are the challenges (difficulties) in incorporating the global agenda discussed in international frameworks such as G7 and G20 into local government policies.

Chie (Nagoya University):

How we should change cities to become climate neutral? How urban planning should be created to prevent climate change becoming serious?

There is very little description in Local governments' urban planning about carbon neutrality and no alignment with their CAPs. Also, numerical evidence is scarce and many LGs think that by switching from private cars to public transport, the issue of Climate Change can be resolved. My question to you is:

- What should we do to create urban plans that can achieve decarbonization?



Yuma (Nagoya University):



I am doing research on the decarbonization of the transport system. Is sticking to the CASE (connected, automated, smart and electric) will reduce carbon emissions? Not necessarily. An empty train is not the decarbonized image we wish to achieve. We are researching the CO2 emission throughout the whole life cycle of transportation means which can lead to Evidence-Based Policy Making (EBPM). Local authorities always want to know how to calculate the CO2 emissions. If there is a simple calculation method, this tool will be helpful. My question is:

- What is needed for a transport system that fits the characteristics of each region?

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Haruki (Climate Youth Japan):

With youth leading the way, we can have an equitable and sustainable society (this is our vision). An input we have study sessions and as for the output, we will make policy recommendations. For study sessions, we will have 7 different themes. For occasional activities, we dispatch youth to Conference of Youth (COY) which is the COP version and we host events and contribute to panels. Today's theme is Mobility and energy transition. Given the fact the building infrastructure is in the hands of local and national authorities, we also need to have civic engagement for a successful implementation of climate plans. In terms of citizens' environmental awareness, we can help the LGs with the civic society engagements. My questions to the mayors are:

- Do you offer any kind of environmental education?



Discussion:

Ambassador Paquet (EUD):



The G7/G20 and Hiroshima summit declaration address climate and environment ambitiously, setting targets for wind and solar energy deployment. Collaboration between Europe and Japan is vital. Europe's legislation mandates reducing CO2 emissions below 55% by 2030. The 2050 goal is losing relevance. Mayors face the challenge of aligning broad policy objectives with specific requirements. is an exciting opportunity to drive transformative change and foster ownership. That is why if I were not the Ambassador, I would like to be a mayor! I look forward to hearing examples from all.

Mayor Wako (Tomiya City):

Tomiya achieved city status on Oct. 10th, 2016, and initiated city planning through round table discussions with citizens. SDGs promotion was a key focus, with initiatives for all 17 goals in our comprehensive plan. We emphasize the importance of transforming citizens' behavior and raised environmental awareness through a booklet distribution. Due to the absence of railways, we rely on cars for mobility but have implemented hydrogen buses through collaboration with Miyagi Kotsu, Miyagi prefecture, and the Ministry of Environment. EVs serve as our official city council cars, and we have plans for a future railway service. Our environmental education includes



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elementary school students raising bees, science fairs, and showcasing the supply chain to citizens.

Mayor Katayama (Niseko Town):



Regarding the international framework, we must emphasize the importance of concrete actions for environmental work. In Niseko, we have implemented several measures:

- New houses must meet high insulation standards.
 - We issue SDGs certificates.
 - Hotels are required to promote environmental policies due to our status as a resort town.
 - A corporation and a trading firm were established to handle urban planning and forest resource management, respectively, as we cannot oversee everything and must involve citizens.
- We formed a committee for children's town planning and distributed an SDGs booklet to elementary schools, along with environmental education.
 - In terms of transportation, local governments nationwide should embrace new challenges without fearing mistakes.
 - Our goal is to create a society that is open to ambitious objectives.

Marjan (Moderator, GCoM Japan):

I really like your phrase of “not fearing of making mistakes”. I think that that is really important.

Mayor Shimada (Kushima City):

As for the G7, awareness raising is top priority for us, and that is one of the reasons we declared net zero.

- A carbon sink certification system was implemented to raise awareness among citizens regarding the materials used in house building.
- Energy security is a priority, particularly for our aging population, and storage batteries play a crucial role in transportation systems.
- In Kushima, promoting agriculture while reducing carbon emissions is essential, given its agricultural economy.
- Promoting afforestation is important.
- Multi-level governance and collaboration are crucial for effective environmental efforts.
- Strong leadership is needed to prioritize environmental prosperity over economic development.



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Director Kino (Ministry of Environment, Japan):



We collaborate with local governments in the Ministry of Environment to achieve decarbonization in urban planning and transportation systems. Urban planning presents unique challenges that require innovative approaches. By 2030, Japan aims to have 500 leading areas focused on decarbonization across various sectors, including transportation. The political leadership of mayors is crucial in establishing visions, policies, allocating budgets, and assembling the right staff. Breaking down silos and fostering collaboration among stakeholders from different sectors is vital, and mayors play a pivotal role in this process. The Ministry of Environment provides support for plan implementation.

Marjan (Moderator, GCoM Japan):

We do not have much time but since this is a round-table discussion, it makes sense to have follow-up questions/comments (perhaps from the youth speakers or the observers). I encourage you to use this short time; we may have 30 seconds for each person. Any brave volunteers?

Follow-up questions/comments

Lina (Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability):

Mayor Katayama, please elaborate on the children's town planning in Niseko, what is the process?

Mayor Katayama (Niseko Town):

We usually call upon some elementary and junior high school students and those who applied could be part of this organization. We also have a children's assembly. We will hold study sessions in nature or e.g., the compost center where kitchen waste is turned into fertilizer and we discuss such matters with children and repeat such events annually.

Haruki (Climate Youth Japan):

My question is for Mayor Wako. You said a paper booklet was distributed, but is this form of information dissemination sustainable?

Mayor Wako (Tomiya City):

You are right, booklet is printed but we thought this would be the best approach for our audience from children to the elderly to understand the topic.

Marjan (Moderator, GCoM Japan):

Thank you everyone for this delightful exchange of thoughts. Although we seek taking more questions from the floor, especially the observers, the time is running short and we had to move to panel 2.

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Lina (Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability):

JYPS is an organization that collects Japanese youth voices and facilitates meaningful engagement through policy proposals. Individuals under 30 years old and youth groups/organizations can participate and network through our platform. Both national and international Acts recognize the importance of children's voices (ages 15 to 30). Understanding the diverse age groups and being flexible is key to engaging youth, considering their various educational and employment statuses.

Creating a safe space that promotes representation, diversity, and inclusivity is essential for youth to speak up. We collaborate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to implement SDGs. While youth activation is crucial, meaningful engagement is achieved through the involvement of a large number of young people. Therefore, my question to the leader is:

- What or how will meaningful youth engagement be in your city?



Sayaka (Human Activist):



Does the lifestyle of Japanese youth hinder their active involvement in environmental issues? In Japan, there is a lack of systematic education on climate change. However, during my internships in Denmark and the UK, I personally experienced learning about ecology through practical engagement. We need flexibility and space for reflection in the learning process. To address this, I moved to Minakami town in Gunma last year to establish a green school. In Japan, environmental and climate issues are often treated as distant problems, using complex terminology. While behavior change is necessary, each individual must feel a personal responsibility for the environment. Without this mindset, nothing will change.

Our lifestyle influences our decisions and vice versa. That's why I believe a green school can bridge the gap between nature and people, as well as between the body and mind. Therefore, we seek financial and human support for this project. Many young people do not perceive themselves as having influence over decisions concerning their living environment. Education offers an opportunity for youth to become more actively engaged.

Marjan (Moderator, GCoM Japan):

Thank you Sayaka for building on your experience. What you said is aligned what Ambassador Paquet highlighted about actions being designed and owned by people which inherently has the item of flexibility and systematic approach in it.

Takakazu (G7/G20 Youth Japan):

I chaired the environmental track of the Y7 summit. I also represented Japan in last year's Y20 Indonesia. One of the main questions of the Y7 communique is "how to create an inclusive world". Climate change is impacting everyone but not equally.

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There are many teenagers in Tokyo, Nagoya, etc. who spend the night in the streets. Heat waves are becoming more frequent with devastating effects. So, it is critical to support such young people in need.

On another note, biodiversity can attract tourism and boost economy. However, tourism can negatively affect biodiversity and local people's lives.

Lastly, I would like to highlight the urgency for developing a system to work together with the administrative sector. Commuting is becoming more and more difficult. So, providing online services could be a key, not only for the users of such services but also for local employees. This can make our society more resilient. These are the issues I wish to discuss. My question is:



- Given the inequality in the impact of climate change, how can local governments increase the support for the vulnerable to climate change (e.g., homeless people)?

Kotoko (Change Our Next Decade):



I want to make three points here:

1. We need to have intergenerational equity perspectives incorporated in the promotion of policies in the environmental field.
2. We need to make sure that climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation are balanced.
3. We need to have synergies among 2030 Paris framework and Montreal framework.

We are also part of JYPS and we collaborate with CYJ (Climate Youth Japan). We have witnessed severe biodiversity loss in the past 50 years. Climate change and biodiversity conservation should go hand in hand. There are synergies and trade-offs. To achieve the SDGs, we need to have more balanced action. Around 45% of Japanese

people are aware of climate change urgency but only less than 2% recognize biodiversity issue as a crisis. Biodiversity loss is always caused by human activity. So, it is not only climate, but also biodiversity that needs to be mainstreamed. My question is:

- Is there a movement to simultaneously promote climate change measures and biodiversity conservation? If so, what specific measures are being implemented?

Discussion:

Mayor Yamazoe (Yosano Town):

Yosano Town thrives on agriculture and textile, with a focus on circular agriculture. We produce 100% organic fertilizer, which is utilized in 20% of our farmlands, fostering a cooperative relationship between the local government and farmers for a harmonious coexistence of agriculture and nature. These efforts have resulted in the return of rare birds,

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shrimp, and insects to our town, contributing to climate change adaptation and biodiversity conservation.

Climate change impacts vary across different areas of Yosano Town. Mountainous regions like Satoyama suffer from heavy rain damage, underscoring the importance of forest management to protect vulnerable residents. We employ advanced technology to better understand our forested areas and actively engage with citizens in responding to climate change. This dialogue provides an excellent opportunity to share perspectives with the youth, and we extend an invitation to visit our town, conveniently located near Kyoto City.



Marjan (Moderator, GCoM Japan):

Thank you, Mayor Yamazoe. I think what you said about the organic fertilizer, forest and education were examples of the out-of-the-box thinking as director Kino from the Ministry of Environment also mentioned earlier.

Mayor Saito (Yoichi Town):



The questions raised are interconnected with social issues. How can we engage youth, foster flexible education, and build resilience? Also, what about the unequal environmental impact? As the mayor of a small town, distinct from urban areas like Tokyo, there is a noticeable gap in discussions between local communities and urban centers. Social issues like silver democracy and generational gaps lie at the core. Some municipalities have a majority elderly population, resulting in policies primarily catering to their needs. However, with effective management, these policies can be redirected towards the youth, although there is a potential risk.

Youth participation in policy-making is crucial for shaping the future, a common theme across municipalities. Youth involvement varies, with competing radical and conservative groups, but the majority tends toward inaction. Raising awareness and organizing enlightening activities can encourage youth to take responsibility for the planet, fostering a more sustainable society.

Marjan (Moderator, GCoM Japan):

Thank you, Mayor Saito for touching upon the differences between rural and urban areas. Lina, I think Mayor Saito already answered to one of your concerns about the youth engagement risks.

Mayor Hayashi (Yamagata City):

Three years ago, I learned about "decarbonization" and "SDGs" during a City Council Q&A session. Over the past three years, Yamagata has undergone a transformation. We implemented a successful park-and-ride model at bus terminals, providing free parking to encourage bus usage, resulting in over 2,000 riders in two years. Our decarbonization Council,

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involving local businesses, has held six meetings to discuss individual strategies for promoting decarbonization.

Furthermore, we have made school lunches free of charge and are exploring the possibility of offering organically-grown rice-based lunches in municipal nursery schools. We have also established a partnership system for city cleanup programs, collaborating with citizens and corporate members who pick up litter. Expanding youth participation is crucial, and we engage young families through dedicated awareness-raising counters during city events and festivals.



Mayor Korenaga (Usa City):



We incentivized the adoption of EVs by granting subsidies of up to 100,000 JY to 38 users, along with the need for charging infrastructure. Subsidies of the same amount are provided for home chargers and storage batteries. Corporate users can apply through a third-party organization, though meeting the requirements can be challenging. Additionally, we promote measures against global warming and environmental protection, offering a 50,000 JY subsidy to one organization.

Our designation as an Agricultural World Heritage site highlights Kunisaki Peninsula's exemplary circular agricultural economy. The chestnut tree forest serves as a catchment area for river water used in agriculture. Our systematic approach, alongside traditional agriculture, has been instrumental in preserving biodiversity in Usa.

We are also proud to have one of the world's top 100 rice terraces, and restoration projects have involved the participation of high school and college students.

Director Kino (MoE Japan):

The discussions were thought-provoking. MoE Japan focuses on consolidating nature-positive climate action and biodiversity preservation post-COP27. We are exploring renewable energy, deforestation, and biodiversity with a unified viewpoint. Deforestation negatively impacts carbon sinks. Youth participation in policy-making is crucial, and we've gathered many ideas thus far. The key is envisioning the country/city we desire, with youth playing an influential role. Creating markets aligned with biodiversity and climate change measures are vital, with youth's impact on the economy being significant. Expanding the circle of willing and ambitious individuals is necessary, and the administrative sector should facilitate close cooperation.

Ambassador Paquet (EUD):

The trip around Japan was wonderful. I couldn't find one municipality when I searched on Google. Where is Usa City located? I hope to continue these conversations and support them as much as possible. Regarding biodiversity advocacy and the doughnut economy, silver

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democracy is an important consideration often overlooked in public policy. Advocacy should harness both the energy of youth and the involvement of the elderly. In Europe, the impact of Greta Thunberg on public policy has been profound, leading to significant environmental transformation. Demonstrations involving not only youth but also many others have been remarkable.

Biodiversity poses a significant challenge, often underestimated compared to climate change. While climate change receives global attention, biodiversity's importance is not fully understood, particularly in Europe. Nature-based solutions, as discussed by mayors, offer the benefits of mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity promotion in urban environments. The COVID-19 lockdowns showed how quickly nature can rebound, flourishing in parks we couldn't access. This offers optimism and hope. Prioritizing nature-based solutions creates more pleasant and livable cities, aligning with the political goals of such efforts.

As mayors, leaders, politicians, and diplomats, the main challenge lies in determining our compass and the focus of public policies and societal mobilization. In the past, the compass was simply growth and development, which made sense at the time. However, traditional economic terms no longer suffice for today's world. We need a smarter compass, one that considers the doughnut economy concept. This approach broadens the idea of growth by defining an outer circle representing the planet's limits in terms of biodiversity, water, and CO₂, and an inner circle focused on societal well-being, health, education, and quality of life. Public policies should aim to place society within this doughnut, avoiding exceeding the planet's limits. Climate change is a human problem, and the doughnut economy offers a fascinating perspective to approach policy-making by reevaluating instruments and constraints. I share this insight as someone with a background in research and innovation, finding it immensely intriguing.



Marjan (Moderator, GCoM Japan):

Thank you, Ambassador for your remarkable insights. I think there was plenty of food for thought in your speech for everyone in this room. Any final questions or comments from the audience?

Follow-up questions/comments

Lina (Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability):

It is inspiring that youth in Europe changed the world. hope that we could also educate the youth in Japan and actively engage them.

Closing:

Director Kino (MoE Japan):

I want to express gratitude to the EU Ambassador and the organizers. The measures shared by cities and youth organizations provide encouragement to our ministry. Reflecting on my

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first attendance at the EUD years ago, discussions on strategies with EU, industry, and business in Japan helped us adopt carbon neutrality as our compass in 2019. There is significant political will behind this, and substantial changes are happening, driven particularly by cities and mayors. Decarbonization needs to be integrated into daily life. The youth's message of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees has been a powerful source of support and inspiration for our ministry. Today's opportunity to listen to ideas contributes to envisioning a society that we can take pride in.

Secretary-General Sugiyama (GCoM Japan):



Thank you everyone for such in-depth discussion. At this moment, we have 42 pledged municipalities, but if we can recruit more members, we can change more things and with more power.

We need not to forget that it is not all about CO2 emissions. We need to have a comprehensive approach. As a mayor you have the power to change things.

I look forward to have similar discussions in the near future with you.

Also, I would like to thank the interpreters and the graphical recorder. We will share the illustrations (graphical recordings with everyone later.

Marjan (Moderator, GCoM Japan):

Thank you so much everyone. This dialogue was a remarkable moment for us in the sense that we brought together all these different stakeholders. Building on what Ambassador Paquet and Director Kino said, I would like to add that let's look for the compass in our daily lives, no matter what role/position we have. We should seize every moment and act upon what we believe in and disseminate it to the people around us.

The End

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Appendix

1. Graphical recordings of panel 1 (JP)

1.1 Speeches

世界首長誓約/日本 誓約自治体と若者との対話
GCoM Japan Cities and Youth Dialogue

Session 1. モビリティとエネルギー移行

Yuki TOKUNAGA
G7/G20 Youth Japan

Haruki YAHAMOTO
Climate Youth Japan

Chie Sato, Yuma YAMADA
Graduate School of Environment Studies,
Nagoya University

Covenant of Mayors
for Climate & Energy JAPAN
世界首長誓約/日本

1.2 Discussion

世界首長誓約/日本 誓約自治体と若者との対話
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