

Environmental Issues at the 2019 G20 in Japan



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Overview of This Presentation

1. Briefly highlight how environmental issues were addressed at the G20
 - Not just the Energy & Environment Ministers Meeting, but also other parts of the G20
2. Positive points & areas to encourage greater progress
 - From the point of view of the environment

Climate



Leader's Declaration

Climate Paragraph

- Reaffirmed commitment to Paris Agreement (PA); strong language
- US paragraph, withdraw from PA

Energy & Env. Ministers

Communique

- Climate not mentioned directly
- Indirectly: energy transition theme
- Renewable energy, efficiency
- Resource efficiency

Energy Paragraph

- 3E+S (Energy security, econ. efficiency, env., safety)
- Role of all energy sources
- Didn't mention renewable energy, sustainability
- Hydrogen, CCUS (carbon capture utiliz. & storage)
- Phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies

Action Plans

- Karuizawa Innovation Action Plan on Energy Transitions & Global Environment for Sustainable Growth
- Adaptation & Resilient Infrastructure

Others

- Mentioned as a challenge, e.g. Agriculture Ministers declaration, but not discussed in detail



Overall

- Mentioned in the preamble, a few instances elsewhere
- Main priority is on economic growth, not sustainability
- US did not object to SDGs
- G20 has an SDG Action Plan (from G20 2016 China)

Osaka Update

(Annual G20 SDG update)

- Highlights Japan's 2019 G20 priorities – Health, education, quality infrastructure, innovation, gender equality, climate change, marine environment
- Mostly lists progress on previous action items

“Osaka Comprehensive
Accountability Report on G20
Development Commitments”

- Previous report was 2016
- 54 Commitments
- 19 “complete,” 33 “on track,” 2 “mixed progress”

Environment-1

Leader's Declaration

List of environmental issues mentioned

- Extreme weather events & disasters
- Climate change
- Resource efficiency
- Air, land, freshwater, marine pollution,
- Biodiversity loss
- Sustainable consumption & production
- Urban environmental quality
- Energy transitions

Others

G20 Principles on Quality Infrastructure

- Principles include sustainability, environment, climate

Agriculture Ministers Declaration

- Emphasizes sustainability, inclusiveness
- Acknowledges climate change, highlights extreme weather

Environment-2

Energy & Env. Ministers Meeting

Communique: Focus on Energy Transitions

- Energy part: renewables, efficiency (though also fossil fuels)
- Environment part: Resource efficiency, marine plastic, adaptation & resilient infrastructure, including ecosystem-based approaches

Action Plans

- Karuizawa Innovation Action Plan on Energy Transitions & Global Environment for Sustainable Growth
- Implementation framework for marine plastic
- Adaptation & resilient infrastructure

Areas to Encourage Greater Progress, Limitations

Overall Issues

- Documents mainly highlight importance
- Modest actions (even “action plans”)
 - Mainly information sharing
 - Existing activities of countries, international organizations
- Not enough to solve the problems, not enough urgency
- Should focus on sustainability, well-being
 - G20 concept: “strong, sustainable, balanced, inclusive growth”
 - In many places, shortened to “growth” or “economic growth”

Specific Issues

- US disassociation from Paris Agreement
- Too much emphasis on fossil fuels
 - “Major role” in energy transitions”
 - Included in energy innovation
 - Carbon Capture Utilization and Storage
- Finance ministers & central bankers
 - Discussed climate/ green finance in the past, but not this time.

Structural Limitations of G20

- Discussion forum, not operational
- Rotating host country
- Consensus decisions

Positive Points (1) - Overall

- Not the end of multilateralism. They reached an agreement.
- Climate change, and some environmental issues were mentioned.
- SDG plan is continued (especially focusing on energy access)
- International tax reform may be beneficial, more resources for sustainability
- Theme of “energy transitions” captures the need for change
- “Quality Infrastructure” investment principles include environmental sustainability
- Existing (modest) cooperation projects continue
- First time for the G20 to hold an environment ministers meeting
 - Combined with energy ministers, promotes a more integrated perspective
 - Moves beyond the traditional focus on economic crises and macroeconomic policy

Positive Points (2) - Specific

- Major environmental problems were acknowledged
 - Climate change, biodiversity loss, resource efficiency, sustainable consumption & production, air, land, freshwater & marine pollution, urban environmental quality)
- “Welcomes the impressive progress” of renewable energy and emphasized the importance of technologies for system integration of variable renewable energy.
- Reaffirmed commitment to rationalize & phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies (from 2009 Pittsburgh Leaders Declaration)
- Highlighted “circular economy,” “ecosystem based approaches” (US didn’t object)
- Key theme of adaptation and resilient infrastructure (US didn’t object)

Conclusion

- * Worst case scenario was avoided.
- * Multilateral cooperation continues. Existing projects continue.
- * Useful progress on some key issues (plastics, quality infrastructure, etc.)
- * The outcome included a variety of positive elements
- * Outcome is comparable to past G20 meetings.
- * But still not making major real progress on key issues
- * Much more ambition, more action is needed
- * G20 engagement groups should consider how to encourage G20