



Policy Proposal for the G7 Hiroshima Summit

Japan as “boundary spanner”: building a more inclusive world

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I. Introduction: Background, philosophy, and our understanding of the issues

For many years, the Japan Association of Corporate Executives (referred to below as “Keizai Doyukai”) has advocated the transformation of Japan into “a country that is not only valuable, but indispensable.”¹ As a culmination of our efforts towards this goal, we released a set of policy proposals for a “Society Co-created by its Seikatsusha”²³ in October 2022. These proposals set out our vision of a high-quality state that pursues growth not only of the *scale* but also the *quality* of its economy, and holds a diverse range of values by accommodating various measurements of happiness for every single stakeholder in society. It goes without saying that this vision of a “Society Co-created by its Seikatsusha” is not something limited to Japan. It is an idea that can be applied globally and developed into a vision for a world where all countries and regions, regardless of the size of their economies, can pursue *qualitative* growth, and hold a diverse range of values by accommodating various measurements of happiness for every single stakeholder in international society. Specifically, in a world that faces countless challenges without any clear answers, our proposals envisage an international community in which each country builds mutual trust by playing a leading role in an area where it can make use of its unique strengths to find solutions to these challenges, thereby achieving sustainable development. In short, every single country will be not only valuable, but also indispensable in realizing this vision.

With this view of the world in mind, the Japan of today faces a variety of social and economic challenges, and economic commentators often tend to focus on Japan’s inherent weaknesses. If Japan is to contribute to the international community, however, we must remind ourselves of the country’s distinctive strengths, use them to tackle the challenges facing the international community, and take the lead in finding solutions with the aim of becoming “not only valuable, but an indispensable presence” in the world. This is the

¹ Keizai Doyukai, “Human Resources Strategy for Making Japan Not Only Valuable, but Indispensable, to the Common Good of the World: Act Now to Revitalize Japan,” June 21, 2018.

² Keizai Doyukai, “Realize Sustained Creation of Diverse Values Through a Society Co-created by Its Seikatsusha: Seikatsusha’s Choices and Actions,” October 11, 2022.

³ “Seikatsusha,” in concrete terms, includes all “individuals” in multiple roles and positions, such as family members, residents in local communities, voters, consumers, and workers. In that sense, company employees, business executives, politicians, public servants, and students are all “Seikatsusha.” In addition, all “organizations” formed by a collection of individuals, such as companies, groups, political parties, legislatures, local governments, government ministries, and schools, are also “Seikatsusha.” There is no English translation that can adequately express the concept of “Seikatsusha”. It is reckoned that only a few countries in the world have such a comprehensive concept. In Keizai Doyukai’s discussions, it was also pointed out that the presence of “Seikatsusha” with a high cultural standard who can form a big collective may become a uniquely Japanese approach that will serve as the foundation for realizing a sustainable society.

starting point for, and remains the central point of, our discussions in considering specific economic policy issues at Keizai Doyukai.

The world faces numerous issues without clear solutions. Given the current international situation, however, we believe the most pressing issues that require global solutions are the divisions in the international community arising from the growing tension between the United States and China as well as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and climate change—a problem that is expected to have a serious impact on all humanity. In addition, although the short-term effects will be limited, developing human resources with a global perspective should be considered the most important issue in the medium-to-long term, and therefore requires immediate action.

When examining these challenges facing the international community today, it is clear that the issues of “inclusion” and “division” intersect and collide more intensely than ever before. On this point, Japan can be said to occupy a unique position, especially given its following characteristics (strengths):

- As a member of the G7 and the third largest economy in the world, and as a country that has always strictly adhered to international law, Japan is well positioned to lead the international community
- Being located in Asia, Japan has strong economic ties and cultural affinities with Asian countries (it is Japan that campaigned for the idea of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific [FOIP])
- Culturally, Japan understands and appreciates an animistic way of thinking, and can therefore take a different approach than the West with regard to coexisting with nature, the acceptance of foreign cultures, and the fusion of foreign cultures with domestic ones. These characteristics give it an attitude of respect for cultural and natural diversity
- The country has a high level of advanced technology and a broad industrial base
- It has top-level standards of primary education in international comparisons

Japan will host the G7 Summit in 2023. The G7 was originally a framework for the world's advanced economies to discuss important global issues such as trade, the economy, national security, and climate change. However, in today's world, where other international bodies are not fully performing their expected roles of responding to global challenges, the G7 has become increasingly important as a forum for international policy coordination on the issues of “inclusion” and “division” mentioned above. In particular, the G7 Summit is the biggest event where leaders of the member countries come together at one venue for the highest level of decision-making. Therefore, Japan's role as host of this year's summit is extremely important. Of course, we must calmly face up to the

reality of the changes taking place in the global order. In the area of economic security, for example, we can no longer take for granted globalization and free economic activities, and have to accept the fact that “division” has become unavoidable to a certain degree in today’s world.

This is exactly why Japan, as the country with the distinctive strengths outlined above, should act as a “boundary spanner” and link the G7 members with other countries. It is in the world’s best interest, as well as Japan’s, that the global order is as “inclusive” as possible, rather than following a path of unproductive conflict and division. By “inclusivity,” we mean an approach that avoids simple binary thinking and incorporates as many different countries as possible while continuing to uphold principles such as the rule of law and a free and open international order. More specifically, this approach aims for a model of collaborative discussion in which countries from the Global South can also participate fully.

Japan should contribute to the construction of a more inclusive international order. This will boost Japan’s international presence as a “country that is not only valuable, but indispensable”—Keizai Doyukai’s goal—and will also improve Japan’s reputation in the international community. Based on this perspective, Keizai Doyukai’s Economic Policy Project Team proposes ways in which Japan can take the initiative at the upcoming G7 Summit.

II. Proposals

As G7 host country this year, Japan should maintain the principle of “inclusivity,” especially during discussions in the following three main fields: responding to the challenges of economic security; climate change countermeasures and decarbonization; and investment in the future.

It will also be important to adopt an attitude of openness and inclusion towards countries from the Global South through actions such as extending an invitation to the G7 Summit to India, which is hosting the G20 Summit in 2023 and is now believed to be the most populous country in the world.

1. Responses to economic security

(1) The current situation

The world has been divided into opposing camps that are dependent on each other economically. This has led to a number of risks outlined below. (These risks and related policies are organized systematically in the context of geo-economics, which

analyzes the global economy and geopolitics together).

- (a) The risk that sensitive technology could pass into the hands of the opposing camp and be used for military purposes.
- (b) The risk of disruptions to the supply of important strategic materials or substances for which a country is dependent on a rival power in the opposing camp.
- (c) Where fundamental infrastructure is dependent on materials, services, or technologies supplied by a rival power in the opposing camp, there is a risk that this infrastructure may be sabotaged by blocking access or destructive actions to these materials, services, or technologies.
- (d) The risk that products dependent on the market of a rival power in the opposing camp might be subject to an import ban or tariffs.
- (e) Even without an actual supply disruption or ban on market access, there is a risk that a rival power in the opposing camp will weaponize this dependence in order to apply political pressure.

In response to tensions in the international situation, Japan has embarked on an effort to bolster its national security, which involves a thorough overhaul of its defense capabilities. Since addressing economic security is regarded as part of this initiative, the Japanese government enacted the “Act on the Promotion of National Security through Integrated Economic Measures (Economic Security Promotion Act),” which includes measures to develop key technologies, strengthen supply chains, maintain key infrastructure, and introduce a patent non-disclosure system. All these moves are in response to the risks outlined above, and similar steps are being taken not only by Japan, but by many other countries as well.

These actions, however, require a strategic reorganization of the international order because they adversely affect the freedom and predictability of economic activities by the private sector and also contradict some of the principles of free trade that Japan has adhered to, such as WTO principles.

Therefore, given the changes in the international situation, including the growing tension between China and the United States and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Japan should use its position as host of this year’s G7 Summit to make the following proposals.

(2) Topics for discussion and desirable outcomes

Japan should take steps to improve economic security. However, given that it has

promoted multilateral free trade for years, Japan should take the lead in unanimously confirming and declaring that excessive limits on free trade and bloc economies in the name of economic security are NOT desirable outcomes.

(a) Promulgating an appropriate balance between free trade principles and economic security

An appropriate balance must be struck between free trade principles and economic security, without any bias in favor of either side. The international community should devise a framework that will ensure any exceptional measures taken based on the requirement for economic security do not become arbitrary.

With regard to the so-called “friend-shoring” that the United States is developing with its allies and other friendly nations, steps should be taken to clarify the compatibility of this approach with WTO principles, and any agreement should be made subject to the necessary conditions of the rule of law and the promotion of free and open trade and investment.

(b) Improving the predictability of economic security measures

Many countries are increasingly imposing stricter controls on exports, imports, and investments in the field of cutting-edge and sensitive technologies. There is also a need for speedier coordination of international policy when imposing economic sanctions in response to attempts to change the status quo by force, such as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

In this context, it is critical for businesses that government interference is predictable. Therefore, we recommend the G7 countries take the initiative of establishing a permanent body or taskforce in order to multilaterally agree upon the principles that are applied when restrictions are imposed in the context of economic security and economic sanctions.

Supply chain management is one of the issues that should be evaluated on a multilateral basis. In order to respond to the challenges of economic security as supply chains become increasingly complex, the G7 countries should discuss the creation of an international framework to strengthen the transparency and accountability of vendors and suppliers, which will include establishing principles that will work as requirements for “reliable vendors” and “reliable suppliers.”

Another issue that should be considered is the countermeasures taken

against acts of economic coercion.⁴ It is important to ensure that countermeasures are effective and fair, and that they remain controllable and proportionate. There should be a framework for designing international rules which sets standards for determining what countermeasures can be regarded as proportionate to the original economic coercion. We also recommend that governments and businesses establish a common avenue for communication and coordination when considering these issues.

2. Responses to climate change and decarbonization

(1) The current situation

The G7 Hiroshima Summit follows the discussions and outcomes of the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Therefore, the G7 Summit should ensure that major emitting countries share a sense of urgency about climate change and should cement their commitment to future international goals and close collaboration to resolve the problem.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has played a major role as a venue for international negotiations with regard to the adoption of the Paris Agreement and formulation of detailed rules. At the most recent COP27 meeting in 2022, advanced countries and developing countries were sharply opposed: the former called for moving ahead with discussions about a working plan for mitigations (reduction and absorption of greenhouse gas emissions) by 2030, while the latter demanded financial support for loss and damage sustained as a result of climate change. However, The Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan that was struck at the last minute was an unprecedented deal and included the creation of a long-overdue fund to compensate for loss and damage experienced by developing countries by providing monetary support. It should be noted that some further progress was made subsequently at the World Economic Forum in Davos, including the launch of Giving to Amplify Earth Action (GAEA)—a new initiative to support funding for projects aimed at a carbon-neutral and nature-positive future. However, there are still differences in the positions and thinking of advanced countries and developing countries that may lead to an outright conflict.

⁴ In recent years, in addition to the direct imposition of restrictions, we have frequently observed acts of economic coercion in the form of effective restrictions imposed on international trade and investment in the name of strengthening existing quarantine measures and safety inspections.

In December 2022, the G7 established the Climate Club, which will aim to achieve international coordination on carbon dioxide emission regulations. The plan is to encourage non-G7 countries to participate in the Club as well in the future.

(2) Topics for discussion and desired outcomes

Japan has accumulated technology in the environmental and energy fields, it has a record of giving development assistance to developing countries, and it has expertise in responding to natural disasters. With this in mind, we make the following proposals.

(a) Responding to decarbonization

Japan should look to contribute to the achievement of net zero in Asia by expanding the technical support it extends to decarbonization efforts in the region, as well as by advocating that every transition should take into consideration unique local conditions. In addition, Japan should take the lead in devising truly equitable and effective international rules that can be used to manage and optimize the progress on reducing greenhouse gas emissions around the world.

The Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC) framework announced by the Japanese government back in January 2022 already underlined the importance of moving ahead with an energy transition that factors in individual countries' situations. The G7 should also take steps to reaffirm this kind of optionality for newly emerging economies, including those in Asia. Furthermore, given that there is potentially a contradiction between border tax adjustments and other provisions put in place to ensure a level playing field and the discussions on optionality and WTO principles, Japan should not only recommend that the G7 establish a place for individual countries and interest groups to carry out their ongoing discussions on rule-setting and harmonization of differing interests, but should also play a leading role in advancing these discussions. Inviting the secretariat headquarters of the Climate Club to Japan may be one way of achieving this. It is important to note that Japan should ensure that discussions on rulemaking do not lead to standoffs between regions.

Furthermore, on the finance side, Japan should propose putting in place a framework that can provide appropriate funding for efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in newly emerging economies, particularly in Asia. On this point, it is essential to understand that the scale of funding required

for decarbonization measures far exceeds that necessary for ordinary economic growth, and that its impact will inevitably force us to fundamentally reassess how we think about finance worldwide.⁵

At COP26, there was growing consensus that fundraising by the private sector will be key to climate change countermeasures in the years to come. In order to scale up these efforts and secure the large amounts of funding needed, it will be very important to enhance risk-sharing frameworks between the public and private sectors such as “crowding in,” where public funding (including public finance issued by the International Development Bank and similar organizations) is leveraged in order to maximize private finance as much as possible. At the same time, in order to ensure that the public and private sectors can collaborate and mobilize funding together, it will also be necessary to consider whether existing financial regulations are appropriate in the age of climate change.

(b) Responding to increasingly severe natural disasters

As climate change escalates, natural disasters are becoming more and more severe in countries around the world. Alongside our ongoing efforts toward decarbonization, it is vitally important that we improve our ability to prevent disasters worldwide, and to increase resilience and support recovery when natural disasters unfortunately do take place as part of our “adaptation” to climate change. It is a particularly urgent issue for developing countries with fragile economic and social systems.

It is worth noting that natural disasters are very frequent in Japan, and that our country therefore has a wide range of expertise on all aspects of disaster response and has conducted extensive research into science and technology in this field. This includes prevention and mitigation, as well as post-disaster recovery, both in terms of the “hardware” side and the less tangible “software” side. In other words, disaster response countermeasures are one of Japan’s strengths. The country has disaster prevention measures that use cutting-edge technology and has put evacuation facility infrastructure in place down to the local municipality level. There is a strong awareness of disasters among Japanese people, fostered through evacuation

⁵ According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), investment in clean energy will exceed \$2 trillion by 2030 even under the current policy scenario, and investment equivalent to \$4 trillion will be necessary by 2030 to achieve the 1.5°C target (World Energy Outlook 2022).

drills that start in the pre-school years, and both the national and local governments have a strong commitment to post-disaster recovery. Through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan has used these strengths to contribute to international initiatives on disaster prevention and mitigation. Currently, efforts are underway to reduce economic damage on a global scale based on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–30 that was adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015.

Therefore, Japan should take the lead in building a framework to help developing countries reform their fragile economic and social systems to make them more robust and resilient to natural disasters, and should serve as a bridge between these developing countries and the G7 countries. Japan should also consider a framework for the fund called for by the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan that clarifies the transfer of expertise and technology related to disaster countermeasures.

3. Investment in the future

We cannot deny the reality that conflict and divisions exist in the current international community. However, in order to prevent these negative phenomena from being carried on across the generations, we propose steps to sow the seeds of reconciliation and inclusion for the future. These should be seen as part of a medium- to long-term plan to foster human resources capable of addressing the problems with no clear solutions that face the world in the twenty-first century, and accepting diversity.

In order to ensure a future for the countries of the Global South who are struggling with climate change and other challenges, the G7 should recognize that investment in the next generation is the ultimate solution to every problem. Since this investment is regarded as an important medium- to long-term strategy, it is highly recommended that this action is taken immediately.

(1) The current situation

Even in the twenty-first century, when the world has undergone globalization, most humans still live their lives subject to a sense of belonging to a nation state, or a historical ethnic or religious community.

This sense of belonging to a community is essential to humans as social creatures, but, at the same time, it can also contribute to narrow-minded and exclusionist

thinking. Overcoming this will not be easy, and there have been attempts to develop a new idea of a shared community that encompasses all humanity at a conceptual level.

On this point, we believe that Japan should take a so-called “inductive” approach, whereby different individuals and communities engage in substantive exchanges and explore ways to coexist while acknowledging the differences that exist between them. We believe this is preferable to a conceptual or “deductive” approach that seeks to treat some values as absolutes and redefine others based on the preconceived idea of a universal human community.

Education is extremely important in the context of looking for ways to coexist through this kind of substantive exchange, and there is every reason to emphasize primary education,⁶ during which people’s basic worldviews are shaped.

(2) Topics for discussion and desired outcomes

Contributing to educational inclusion in the Global South

The G7 countries should consider establishing a framework for coordinated international exchanges between people at the primary education level. Specifically, they should consider ways to strengthen these exchanges both qualitatively and quantitatively with public government support to enhance safety and trust, perhaps using a children’s version of the Friendship Force⁷ as a model. One idea would be to organize short-term homestay exchange programs followed by ongoing online exchanges, and extend invitations to those in countries across the Global South to participate.

The G7 should take the lead in further developing an international framework for educational inclusion, including study-abroad programs for children of primary school age as an evolved version of the international exchange programs outlined above.

Human resources are key to the development of any country, and education is vital for this reason. Nevertheless, it is a fact that children in many developing countries

⁶ Here, “primary education” is envisaged chiefly as referring to education equivalent to that received in elementary schools in Japan, but also includes education received at junior high school level (equivalent to education for children aged 6 through 15).

⁷ A grassroots international exchange organization founded by Wayne Smith in the US in 1977 and started with the backing of US President Jimmy Carter. Friendship Force runs activities based on a vision of citizens from different countries sharing their lives through homestays, discovering the differences and commonalities between their ways of thinking and cultures, and helping to achieve world peace by deepening mutual understanding.

are often denied access to an adequate level of education, which means providing educational opportunities is an urgent issue in these countries. Disparities in educational opportunities lead to disparities in income, which can lead to division and conflict. For this reason, promoting educational inclusion in the Global South will not only contribute to the improvement of educational standards and socioeconomic development in these countries, but will also help to foster human resources capable of addressing the global problems facing the world in the twenty-first century without clear solutions.

If children in G7 countries and children in the Global South deepen their mutual understanding through exchanges, this will likely lead to wider opportunities for them to learn about “inclusivity” through these experiences. We also believe that fostering mutual understanding and feelings of affinity can become a source of soft power, helping to bolster security by preventing conflicts between nations and terrorism.

Given that Japan is an Asian country, it should use its position as an international leader in this initiative, particularly by focusing on achieving “inclusivity” in primary education in Asian countries. Japan has an outstanding record in primary education, both in terms of basic academic competence across a wide base, and striking a good balance between knowledge, morals, and physical health. It also has an attractive educational setting thanks to the country’s high levels of safety and the rich natural environment.

We recommend that Japan considers opening up its primary education opportunities to children from other Asian countries and accepting primary school age pupils for study-in-Japan programs. In addition, it should extend training and exchange opportunities to educators responsible for primary school education (expanding this to include secondary education in the future) with an aim of contributing to improving the effectiveness of human resources in the educational community in the Global South.

Table: PISA Results for 2018

● **Comparison of the 37 OECD Member Countries** □ denotes countries with no statistically significant difference from Japan's average score

	Reading literacy	Average score	Mathematical literacy	Average score	Scientific literacy	Average score
1	Estonia	523	Japan	527	Estonia	530
2	Canada	520	South Korea	526	Japan	529
3	Finland	520	Estonia	523	Finland	522
4	Ireland	518	Netherlands	519	South Korea	519
5	South Korea	514	Poland	516	Canada	518
6	Poland	512	Switzerland	515	Poland	511
7	Sweden	506	Canada	512	New Zealand	508
8	New Zealand	506	Denmark	509	Slovenia	507
9	United States	505	Slovenia	509	United Kingdom	505
10	United Kingdom	504	Belgium	508	Netherlands	503
11	Japan	504	Finland	507	Germany	503
12	Australia	503	Sweden	502	Australia	503
13	Denmark	501	United Kingdom	502	United States	502
14	Norway	499	Norway	501	Sweden	499
15	Germany	498	Germany	500	Belgium	499
16	Slovenia	495	Ireland	500	Czech Republic	497
17	Belgium	493	Czech Republic	499	Ireland	496
18	France	493	Australia	499	Switzerland	495
19	Portugal	492	Latvia	496	France	493
20	Czech Republic	490	France	495	Denmark	493
	OECD average	487	OECD average	489	OECD average	489
	Confidence interval* (Japan):		Confidence interval (Japan):		Confidence interval* (Japan):	
	499-509		522-532		524-534	

(Source) Extracted from National Institute for Educational Policy Research, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, “Main Points of the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment tests (PISA 2018),” December 2019.

These initiatives should be of great significance for Japan too, since encouraging a better understanding of, and affinity for, Japan will help strengthen national security. In addition, efforts of this kind are also likely to provide an opportunity for Japanese children to experience diversity from their primary school years, thereby helping to develop human resources with global perspective.⁸ Furthermore, there could be secondary effects such as reenergizing regions with declining populations and increasing the number of people involved in exchanges.

In reality, a number of hurdles exist, the most pressing of these being the fact that children of primary school age may not always be well suited to studying abroad for a long time, considering their level of development. Another hurdle is the fact that the education system in the host country may not be set up to welcome children from other countries, in particular from a linguistic point of view. However, it is also becoming increasingly vital that Japan continues to attract more foreign talent, because its declining population means that it will soon have to rely on other

⁸ The number of Japanese students studying overseas is declining. From a peak of 82,945 in 2004, the number of Japanese people (including working people) engaged in long-time study for an academic degree at an institute of higher education (university, graduate school, etc.) overseas has fallen by nearly 30% to just 61,989 in 2019. (Based on data on Japanese students on the study-abroad website Tobitate Ryugaku Japan.)

countries for human resources.

From this perspective, it is clear that Japan needs to address the challenges described above. We recommend that Japan starts to build a framework for inclusive international exchanges as soon as possible, based on the assessment of how children with foreign backgrounds are currently educated in Japan and the situation overseas.

III. Conclusion

This year's Hiroshima Summit represents a precious opportunity for Japan to demonstrate its commitment to solving global problems as a responsible member of the international community.

Keizai Doyukai will engage in dialogue with the Japanese government and work to ensure that the intent of this proposal is widely shared among policymakers from the G7 countries and that concrete results are achieved. As business leaders, we believe we have key duties and responsibilities, such as strengthening economic security and responding to the challenge of climate change. We will continue to address issues, including the diversification of supply chains, investment in a green transformation aimed at achieving carbon neutrality, innovation, and human resource development,⁹ including primary education.¹⁰

⁹ The Edu-Port Nippon project is one example of collaboration between government and the private sector to promote the Japanese-style education model overseas, and there is scope for private companies to become more proactively involved in undertakings of this kind.

¹⁰ For example, grassroots discussions at forums like the Future Selection Forum established by Keizai Doyukai for policy discussions with multiple stakeholders.

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