

BUILDING A POST-COVID-19 NEW JAPAN:

POLICY SPEECH BY PM KISHIDA

AN EXCERPT

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Introduction

The highest priority issue for the administration is responding to COVID-19. It is precisely because we are facing the hardship of COVID-19 that, rather than stand transfixed, we should build a post-COVID-19 new Japan, with everyone taking up this challenge in cooperation.

Fundamental approach to COVID-19 responses

I advance our responses based on the most up-to-date knowledge in a level-headed manner, as I listen to the views of experts. Even for policies on which decisions have already been taken, I intend to once again develop our response flexibly and without hesitation if a better approach exists.

Responses to the Omicron strain

By adopting the most stringent border measures among the G7 countries, we have minimized the inflow of the Omicron strain and we have had time to prepare for an increase in the number of domestic cases of infection. We will maintain the framework of border measures until the end of February.

Beyond that, from now we will place importance on domestic countermeasures. We will redouble our efforts to ensure that our medical treatment structures are solidly in place, with a focus on providing unerring medical treatment to patients with severe or moderate symptoms and persons at high risk.

Reinforcing our domestic framework of prevention, testing, and early treatment will also be critical. We will further accelerate the schedule for administering the third vaccine dose. The orally administered therapeutic has already been delivered to medical facilities.

A new form of capitalism

From the perspectives of both our Growth Strategy and our Distribution Strategy, we will embed structures into

capitalism that correct its various harmful effects, thereby maximizing the benefits that capitalism brings.

Under our Growth Strategy we will work to resolve social issues, including digitalization, climate change, economic security, and science, technology and innovation, and also bring together investments from both the public and private sectors into fields where Japan has been weak thus far to transform them into engines for growth.

We will also confront the problems of distribution and disparities head on, leading to subsequent growth. In this way, we will set the economy in motion from both the growth and distribution fronts, and by giving rise to a virtuous cycle, we will create a sustainable economy.

The first pillar of the Growth Strategy is revitalizing regions through digitalization. We will vigorously promote a Vision for a Digital Garden City Nation while also realizing bottom-up growth, from the regions to the nation as a whole.

Economic security is also a major pillar. We will enact new laws to, among other things, provide support for making the supply chain more resilient, prepare a safety pre-screening system for critical equipment and systems within core infrastructure, and prepare a patent non-disclosure system for inventions that are sensitive in terms of national security.

If we are to elevate social issues to become engines of growth, the power of science, technology, and innovation will be absolutely essential. Establishing a five-year plan, we will work to get startups off the ground on a large-scale.

The key to realizing a sustainable economy is our Distribution Strategy. First and foremost is wage increases. Second, we will undertake a fundamental strengthening of investments in people. We will at least double public and private investments made in people at an early time. Third, we will maintain the middle class of the next generation, which will shoulder the responsibilities of the future.

Focusing on families with small children and the young generation, we will work to raise household income.

This spring we will compile both the grand design of the new form of capitalism and an action plan. We will share this same awareness of issues with leaders around the world and build up a surge heading towards changes to capitalism.

Responses to the problem of climate change

The public and private sectors are working to share a common overall vision, urgently at least doubling investments into this field and we will be engaged in a transformation of our economy and society as a whole. We will show to the public a path forward for economic and social changes, as our Clean Energy Strategy.

To contribute to the decarbonization of the world, especially Asia, we aim to join forces with like-minded countries in creating the “Asia Zero Emissions Community.”

Towards a society in which all people can feel their purpose in life

We will work to foster women’s economic independence and eradicate violence against women.

We will establish an Agency for Children and Families in order to place policies affecting children at the very center of our society.

Regional revitalization

We will work to transform agriculture, forestry, and fisheries into growth industries.

Keeping the post-COVID-19 world firmly in view, we will promote a shift to greater added value in the tourism industry.

Disaster response measures

I am strongly determined for us to reinforce our efforts to prevent and reduce disasters and enhance national resilience.

In regard to the reconstruction from the Great East Japan Earthquake, we will advance our measures allowing temporary stays in preparation for returning to the area, moving towards the lifting of the evacuation order on Reconstruction and Revitalization Bases.

Diplomacy and security

Firmly holding aloft the flag of ideals for the future, and, looking squarely at the actual situation, I will pursue “realism diplomacy for a new era.”

As the first pillar, we will place importance on the

universal values and principles of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. I will hold talks with President Biden, and we will further reinforce the deterrence and the response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance.

The abductions issue is one of the highest priority issues. Working in cooperation with other countries, I will do everything in my power to realize the return of all the abductees to Japan at the earliest possible date.

The concept of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” is supported by many nations. The Quad of Japan, Australia, India, and the United States is advancing its cooperation, with practical cooperation taking concrete shape. We will also strengthen our cooperation with ASEAN and the countries of Europe. The peace and stability of our neighboring region is also important.

As the second pillar, we will actively work to tackle global-level challenges. I will establish the International Group of Eminent Persons for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons, with the participation of current and former political leaders from around the world. We will convene the first meeting in Hiroshima, aiming at sometime within this year.

The third pillar is efforts to resolutely and fully defend the lives and livelihoods of the Japanese people. We will spend roughly a year drawing up a new National Security Strategy, National Defense Program Guidelines, and Mid-Term Defense Program.

We will realistically examine all options, including possessing what is called “enemy base attack capability,” without excluding any possibilities. We will fundamentally reinforce our defense capabilities with a sense of speed, including through the supplementary budget enacted last month and the budget for fiscal year 2022.

Constitution

Within this Diet session too, I wholeheartedly look forward to active debates on the Constitution being held.

Conclusion

Now, as we carve out a new era, we politicians and the administration are called upon to reform and control ourselves. I will engage in my duties humbly, aiming at politics of trust and sympathy. I make a sincere request to all the Japanese people for their understanding and cooperation. ●

