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SUSTAINABLE JAPAN MAGAZINE

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On wood and its ties to
our lives



A building with two purposes: gallery space and bridge. Completed in 2010.

PHOTO: TAKUMI OTA

Many Japanese architects have successful practices that span the globe, but few compare with Kengo Kuma in sheer number of projects.

Based in Tokyo, with a second office in Paris, Kuma currently has more than 200 projects underway in Japan and abroad. Having worked on the new National Stadium, the main venue for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, Kuma is without doubt one of the nation's leading architects. We sat down with Kuma to hear his thoughts on the future of architecture, and on contemporary architecture's relationship with wood.

"From the very beginning, traditional Japanese architecture has been made of wood and has been designed with harmony with the natural environment in mind," Kuma said. "For example, in houses there are eaves and also deep awnings designed to control exposure to sunlight. Open up the shoji (sliding doors) and a cooling breeze will enter, and an indoor space will become one with the garden and external scenery. The floors are made from

Feature WOOD

ARCHITECTURE

Architect Kengo Kuma reapplies wood to create 'spiritual sustainability'

INTERVIEWER: YOSHIKUNI SHIRAI WRITER: TOSHICHIKA IZUMI



PHOTO: KOUTAROU WASHIZAKI

Kengo Kuma was born in 1954. Before establishing Kengo Kuma & Associates in 1990, he received his Master's Degree in Architecture from the University of Tokyo, where he is currently a University Professor and a Professor Emeritus. After his time as a Visiting Scholar at Columbia University in New York, he established his office in Tokyo. Since then, Kengo Kuma & Associates has designed architectural works in over twenty countries. Kengo Kuma & Associates aims to design architecture which naturally merges with its cultural and environmental surroundings, proposing gentle, human scaled buildings. The office is constantly in search of new materials to replace concrete and steel, and seeks a new approach for architecture in a post-industrial society.

● Summary

建築家・隈研吾が語る、木のサステナビリティ。

日本人建築家の中で、一番多くの建築プロジェクトを抱えるのは隈研吾に間違いない。国内外で200件以上のプロジェクトが同時進行している。東京五輪のメインスタジアム<国立競技場>の設計に参画するなど、日本を代表する建築家だ。その隈研吾に「現代建築と“木”の関係」について聞いてみた。

「木を使用することには、いわゆる地球温暖化を防ぐためのサステナビリティという意味もありますが、それと同時に、その空間を使う人にとって“精神的なサステナビリティ”を生む効果があると考えています。つまり、木という素材には、高密度な都市の中で人間が感じるストレスを、やわらげるとい

う効果があるということです。木を空間の中に置くだけで、その空間の質が全く違うものになってしまう。木を建築の内部空間などに使用すると、学者などが数値を使用して示すサステナビリティ以上の“何か”が建築に現れる、ということを知ってしまったのです。

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PHOTO: KAWASUMI · KOBAYASHI KENJI PHOTOGRAPH OFFICE

The library in Yusuhara, Kochi Prefecture, a town that boasts several of Kengo Kuma's key buildings and is a mecca for his fans. Completed in 2018.

wooden boards and tatami mats, both of which are derived from plants. One of the main styles of traditional Japanese housing is known as *shoin-zukuri*. If you visit Japan, I hope you get the chance to look at some examples. One of the best would be Kojoin Kyakuden at Miidera in Otsu, Shiga Prefecture, which is a National Treasure.”

Shoin-zukuri was a style of residential architecture favored by high-ranking samurai around the Muromachi Period (1392-1573), in which a living room doubling as a study (*shoin*) was at the center of the house. Floors are covered with tatami mats, and there is a *tokonoma* alcove — it is the architectural style most commonly associated with traditional Japanese houses.

“That environmentally friendly and sustainable Japanese architecture exemplified in *shoin-zukuri* lost many of its good parts, especially since the period of high economic growth after World War II,” Kuma said. “Many square buildings made of concrete and steel were made, wood was no longer used, roofs and shades were lost. My idea is to reapply the wisdom of traditional Japanese architecture to contemporary architecture.”

Many of the buildings you make use wood. Why is that?

“The choice of wood of course stems in part from the need for sustainability to counteract global warming, but at the same time, I think wood has the effect of creating ‘spiritual sustainability’ for those who inhabit a space. In other words, wood as a material has the effect of relieving the stress that builds in humans in a dense city — just by placing wood in a space, you can change that space’s essence completely. This is what I discovered — that beyond any ‘sustainability’ that scholars might measure in numbers, there is something much greater that wood brings to an interior.”

So what was it that made you aware of wood as a material, and its ability to transform the quality of a space?

“The turning point for me was when I became involved in a town called Yusuhara in Kochi Prefecture, which had a thriving forestry industry. I first visited in 1992, just when the bubble economy burst, and I had some time on my hands. I got involved in a movement to preserve a wooden theater down there. Until then, I had only built in Tokyo, so I had never really had to reckon with wood as a material. But in this town I tried making six buildings with wood — a town hall, hotel, museum and others — and I had to learn about it as a material: its

architectural expression, psychological effect on users and the need to address environmental problems. I came to understand wood’s potential.”

One of Kuma’s buildings in particular possesses the essence of traditional Japanese architecture: the multipurpose Aore Nagaoka facility, in the Niigata Prefecture city of Nagaoka, which includes the City Hall.

“There is a semi-outdoor space called *Nakadoma* between the City Hall and the City Assembly chambers. It is a place for the citizens to relax, where a pleasant breeze is allowed in. In other words, instead of creating a closed-in air-conditioned space for people to spend their time, we’ve created a space that in traditional houses would be akin to the *doma* (internal areas of earth flooring where shoes are worn) or *engawa* (wooden porches around a house). Those spaces are also both simultaneously internal and external, and naturally air-conditioned. That’s the kind of sustainable thinking I’ve tried to incorporate.”

An exhibition of Kuma’s architecture is being held in Tokyo at the National Museum of Modern Art until Sept. 26 (<https://www.momat.go.jp/english/am/exhibition/kumakengo/>). One of the exhib-

its, “Kuma Looks to Cats to Show Us the City’s Future,” is particularly interesting. Completely opposite to the kind of city planning proposed by architect Kenzo Tange in 1960 during Japan’s period of rapid economic growth, Kuma’s proposal is to think of the city from the perspective of a cat, much closer to the ground than humans. In an era when we have to address sustainability in a range of situations, thinking about things from a different perspective may just provide clues for a pathway forward.

Located in the center of Nagaoka, Niigata Prefecture, this multipurpose facility including the City Hall features a semi-outdoor space covered with a glass roof. Completed in 2012.

PHOTO: FUJITSUKA MITSUMASA



<https://alpha-70th.com>

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PHOTO: OZU CASTLE STAY



Ozu castle is a symbol of the town on the bank of the Hiji River. The castle was once abandoned due to its aging, but it was completely restored in 2004.

Feature WOOD

TRAVEL

The cool, smooth touch of century-old wood This summer, experience life in a kominka

WRITER: ARINA TSUKADA



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PHOTO: OZU CASTLE STAY

Traveling across Japan, wooden houses with tiled roofs are a regular sight. Today these traditional houses, known as *kominka*, are enjoying a resurgence in popularity. There is no clear definition of a *kominka*, but most houses that receive the appellation are of wooden construction and between one and two centuries old. The main appeal of *kominka* is the natural timber used for floors, ceilings, support pillars and other parts of the house. After long decades of use, this timber takes on a deep, warm patina.

Kominka are generally designed to ensure good ventilation, important in a country as humid as Japan. The space inside the house is partitioned by thin paper screens, with little clear demarcation even between interior and exterior. Corridors known as *engawa* open directly onto gardens, forming a mild buffer between interior and exterior that gives the space a mys-

terious depth. Sitting in an *engawa* and listening to the birds and insects outside, one understands how these houses were conceived of as part of nature itself.

Opportunities to experience life in a *kominka* through temporary stays are increasingly prevalent. Old buildings are renovated in accordance with contemporary style and made available as accommodations. Some are divided into individual suites, while others are offered as a whole. Renovating and continuing to use old buildings instead of constructing new ones is truly sustainable. And unlike hotels and *ryokan* inns, renovated *kominka* can give travelers an experience almost like living in a real traditional house. Here, we introduce three accommodation facilities housed in renovated *kominka*, each one offering a unique encounter with a structure shaped by the local climate and history.

Nipponia Hotel Ozu Castle Town

Where the whole town is the hotel
A private journey through castle town history

The city of Ozu is located at the western edge of the island of Shikoku, 2½ hours by plane from Tokyo. Often called “the Little Kyoto of Iyo Province” (the old name of Ehime Prefecture), it is a castle town that produced more than its share of renowned military commanders over the centuries. Nipponia Hotel Ozu Castle Town, which opened in the summer of 2020, is made up of multiple *kominka* and *machiya* townhouses scattered throughout Ozu, turning the entire city into a single “distributed hotel.” Residences formerly belonging to prosperous samurai or merchant families have been renovated into luxurious accommodation facilities where visitors can experience the region’s history almost as if traveling through time.

One building was constructed in the Taisho Era around a century ago as a residence for a former feudal lord, skillfully integrating Western-inspired modern flourishes into the refined forms of early modern Japanese architecture. Another was built by a wealthy merchant during the same period and is noteworthy for its luxurious private garden, complete with *engawa* where visitors can sit and gaze at the garden while breathing in the scent of old timber. There is even a “castle stay” option offering accommodation inside Ozu Castle itself, which is a Designated Cultural Asset. This is the first program in Japan allowing visitors stay inside an actual castle, representing a rare, private opportunity to live like a feudal lord.

● Summary

この夏は、古民家の暮らしを体感する旅へ。

日本各地を旅すれば、そこかしこに木造で瓦屋根という家を見つけることができる。これらは「古民家」と呼ばれ、近年人気を集めている。古民家における明確な定義はないが、主に100～200年前に建てられた木造の家のことを指す場合が多い。古民家の魅力は、第一に天井や床、柱など家の随所に天然の

木が使われていることだ。長い年月を経た木の風合いは味わい深く、おだやかな温もりに包まれる。また高温多湿の日本では通気性を良くするため、仕切りは薄い障子紙で区切れ、庭や外の空間との隔たりが少ないのも特徴だ。特に「縁側」と呼ばれる庭に面した廊下は、室内と屋外をつなぐゆるやかな境界で

あり、この場所が空間に不思議な奥行きをもたらしてくれる。そんな古民家の暮らしを体感できる宿が続々と増えている。新しく建物を建てるのではなく、古い建物を改装して使い続けることは実にサステイナブルだ。そして従来の旅館やホテルとも異なり、その家に暮らすかのような体験が可能になっている。



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<https://kurasuyado.jp/takyo-abeke>

PHOTO: SHUNICHI ITO



Setoda 269, Setoda-cho, Onomichi-shi, Hiroshima
 TEL: 0845-23-7911 <https://azumi.co/>

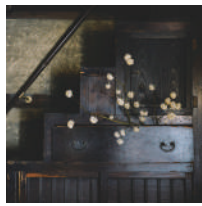
PHOTO: YUNA YAGI, SAKASHITA TOMOHIRO

Iwami-Ginzan Kurasu Yado

Learning a lifestyle through architecture
 Journey to a way of life from two centuries ago

The Iwami Ginzan silver mine was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2007, partly in recognition of the four centuries of mining history it represents. Right nearby is Iwami-Ginzan Kurasu Yado, where old Japanese landscapes and ways of life can still be experienced. *Kurasu* is Japanese for “spend one’s days” or simply “live,” and just as the name suggests, Iwami-Ginzan Kurasu Yado offers a relaxed, congenial taste of life as a householder in a traditional town. The facility includes two buildings. The first, Takyo-Abeke, was originally built as a samurai mansion in 1789. More than 10 years were spent on renovating it from near-ruined condition before reopening it

to visitors in 2008. Household furnishings and tools from a former age have also been restored for use, including the *kamado* stove and stone basin. At mealtimes, all visitors sit down around the same table to enjoy seasonal home-style cooking made using the freshest local ingredients. The other building, Tadaima Katoke, is also a renovated samurai mansion, and caters to visitors seeking a longer stay in the area. (Reservations are not currently being taken, as the building has a long-term resident.)



Azumi Setoda

Experience sukiya-zukuri aesthetics
 Architecture designed for continuous coexistence with nature

Setoda is a small town on Ikuchi Island in the Setouchi Inland Sea. Administratively it is part of the city of Onomichi, Hiroshima, one end of the Shimanami Kaido bridge connecting Honshu to Shikoku. Rich in natural beauty and resources, Setoda prospered as a center for salt-making and fishing, with the local Horiuchi family rising to prominence as wealthy merchant traders in the 17th century. Azumi Setoda, which opened in March this year, lets visitors experience a stay in the former Horiuchi residence, fully renovated for modern comfort. The original building was constructed in 1876, with no expense spared on gathering the finest materials and most

skilled artisans from across the country. The restoration was overseen by architect Shiro Miura, a specialist in the traditional *sukiya-zukuri* style of architecture. Miura’s work has created a contemporary space for today’s visitors that incorporates key elements of the original design, such as the wooden pillars and *shoji* partitions. There are multiple inner gardens on the grounds, and the positions of the trees and rocks in each are carefully calculated to ensure that guest rooms and corridors facing the gardens always enjoy light filtered through leaves. Combined with the brisk breeze off the Setouchi Inland Sea, this offers guests a fully immersive experience.

From **thejapanimes**

In search of Japan’s lost wolves

Is this enigmatic beast – said to be extinct since 1905 – still out there? In a special five-part series, we track an enduring mystery that has captivated the imaginations of many

Alex K.T. Martin
 STAFF WRITER

There aren’t supposed to be any native wolves left in Japan. Once roaming wild across the nation’s abundant forests and mountains, the Japanese wolf’s population was decimated by disease and humans hunting them down in the name of protecting livestock. By the early 20th century, the wolf was presumed extinct. Yet to this day, the animal continues to transfix the minds of many. Worshipped in parts of the nation as a divine messenger and protector of farmland, it appears in numerous leg-

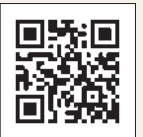
ends and folk tales handed down for centuries in rural communities. It now lives only in our imagination. Or so we thought. In early 2019, I stumbled upon a peculiar tale – one that took me on an unexpected journey centered around the lost beast. A resident of Chichibu, a mountain-ringed city some 70 kilometers northwest of Tokyo, claimed she saw a wolf. It was a cloudy winter afternoon, the middle-aged woman said, when a scrawny animal appeared by the rim of a small, empty pond in her yard. Their eyes met for a few seconds before the creature disappeared into a bamboo forest. “I’m confident it was a wolf,” she insisted. The episode wouldn’t have been particularly noteworthy if it had taken place in, say, Canada or China, nations with sizable gray wolf populations. The Japanese wolf, however, officially became extinct in 1905. Surely the woman must have mistaken a feral dog or a fox for a wolf. But what if she wasn’t mistaken? What if an extinct apex predator still lives among us? It soon became evident that this was much more than a quirky yarn about dubious wolf sightings. It’s a story that brings to life a cast of colorful characters, weaving together a



A pair of wolves carved from wood on display in a museum at Mitsumine Shrine in Chichibu, Saitama Prefecture. OSCAR BOYD

mix of ancient mythology and modern science against a backdrop of sweeping changes that befell this nation over the past several centuries. Take the young American adventurer and the German physician, both of whom find themselves in Japan playing crucial roles in the animal’s zoological history. Then there’s the aging mountaineer on a lifelong mission to find the missing creature, and the renegade academic on a relentless campaign to reintroduce wolves into the archipelago. Meanwhile, DNA researchers from around the world are collecting rare genomic data to unravel the taxonomic puzzle surrounding the mysterious beast. The Japanese wolf isn’t just another animal that has vanished into the mist

of extinction. Its tragic fate and the saga of those invested in understanding the enigmatic carnivore offer a unique window into this country. Some see the wolf as a victim of Japan’s modernization, going so far as to say its disappearance represents the follies of the nation’s decision to open up to the West. Others see the creature’s death as symbolic of the environmental havoc wrought by industrialization and globalization. And for the few who believe in its survival, proving its existence could produce one of the greatest comeback stories of recent times. So, is the Japanese wolf still alive, as the woman in Chichibu first informed me? The search begins here. Read this special series online at <http://jtimes.jp/wolves>.



As Japanese society ages, *akiya* (empty homes) are a growing social problem. A 2018 survey by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications found that 13.6% of residences in Japan were empty, the highest level ever recorded. There are more than 8 million *akiya* across the country in total.

At the same time, traditionally constructed houses known as *kominka* are increasingly being renovated and repurposed as accommodations, cafes or sight-seeing facilities. The latent market for *kominka* could be as high as ¥1.8 trillion (\$16 billion), the Development Bank of Japan estimated in 2015.

Nevertheless, *akiya* continue to be demolished every day. The company Rebuilding Center Japan has recognized the potential for reusing the vast amounts of scrap wood this creates. It was founded by Tadafumi Azuno, originally a designer of commercial and residential spaces nationwide, and his wife, Kanako Azuno. After seeing many beautiful old houses destroyed, the Azunos decided to “rescue” their old fittings and timber, which would otherwise become scrap, and founded a shop and cafe dealing in old tools and construction materials in Suwa, Nagano Prefecture, in 2016. They also launched a business that involved visiting

demolition sites and receiving scrap wood to reuse.

“You can visit a home center and buy cheap and convenient materials from overseas,” Kanako said. “Antique timber, though popular, is also largely imported. Meanwhile, good old timber is constantly being discarded across Japan. We noticed this inconsistency.” Materials from Japan were not reused in the past because “it takes a lot of effort,” she explained. Before scrap can be reused, it must be cleaned and processed, which can be an involved, multi-stage task.

“On the other hand, the costs of procurement are zero,” Tadafumi said. “Only labor costs are required, making it a high gross margin business. You don’t need a major investment in facilities to get started, so it’s easy to create employment. It may hold many hints for supporting independent regional economies in the future.”

Supplying just the right amount of material for each individual customer makes consumer needs visible, even without going through construction firms or architects. In the past, the Azunos say, old timber was ordered for its antique, aesthetic value, but recently more people seek old timber based on an SDG perspective, hoping to eliminate unnecessary waste as

part of a circular consumption model.

Furthermore, not all scrap wood comes from the demolition of existing houses. Even when constructing new buildings, sometimes the material ordered is not used up. If a system could be established to redistribute this scrap instead of simply discarding it, Tadafumi says, market prices would go down and local timber

production would become sustainable, ending reliance on imports and making room for business models that do not burden the environment. “Recycling scrap is expensive and energy-intensive,” he said, “but if you think of it as recognizing the value in discarded materials and reusing them instead, I believe we can create a more sustainable market.”



Rebuilding Center Japan's original patchwork table, made from a variety of old timber.

PHOTO: REBUILDING CENTER JAPAN

Feature | WOOD

INTERIOR

From recycling to reuse: New market for old timber finds value in scrap wood

WRITER: ARINA TSUKADA

PHOTO: REBUILDING CENTER JAPAN

Flooring and construction materials are carefully removed and cleaned for reuse in new buildings.

Rebuilding Center Japan
3-8 Kowata, Suwa-shi, Nagano
<http://rebuildingcenter.jp/>



● Summary

廃材に価値を見出す、新たな古材マーケット。

日本では空き家の増加が大きな社会問題となっている。2018年の総務省の調査によれば、全国に800万戸以上の空き家が存在する。だがその空き家は活用されず、ほとんど解体されているのが現状だ。そうしたなか、解体時に大量に出る廃材のリユースに着目したのが「Rebuilding Center Japan」だ。

東野唯史・華奈子夫妻は、趣のある古民家が解体されていく現場を何度も目の当たりにし、ゴミになってしまう古い建具や木材を「レスキュー」するというコンセプトのもと、長野県諏訪市を拠点に古道具や古材を扱うショップ兼カフェをオープン。同時に古い建物の解体に立ち会い、廃材を資源として引き取る

事業をスタートした。

これまで国産材の再利用が進まなかった理由は、廃材を活用するまでに清掃や加工など多くの手間がかかるからだ。だが最近ではSDGsなどの観点からゴミを無駄にしない循環型モデルとして古材を求める人が増えているという。

Leaders & Readers

jt

This article was published on June 21 at The Japan Times

“Rector” commonly known in Japan as “president,” denotes a senior official in an educational institution, as used in Europe and Latin America.

David Malone, rector of the United Nations University

U.N.’s No. 3 heads global think tank focused on needs of developing countries

WRITER: LOUISE GEORGE KITTAKA CONTRIBUTING WRITER

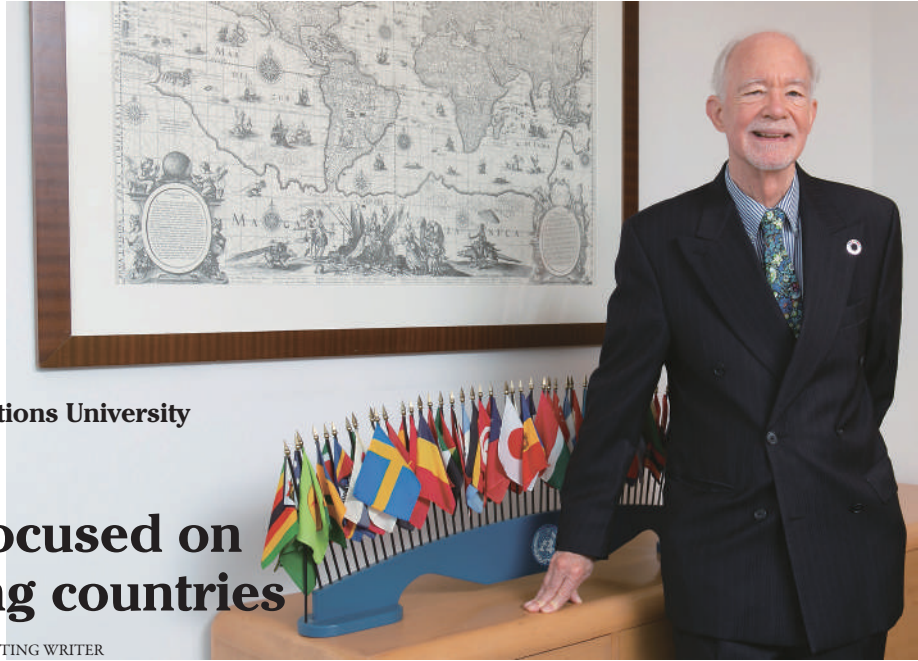


PHOTO: HIROMICHI MATONO

David Malone, the rector for the United Nations University in Tokyo, has worn many hats during his distinguished career. “I have tended to be a gypsy throughout my career; I’d get offered something that might be interesting or I’d go looking for something I’d enjoy doing. I’ve moved around quite a lot, compared to most people, particularly those involved in diplomacy,” Malone said.

Through his role at UNU, he also serves concurrently as an undersecretary-general of the United Nations — the third-highest rank within the United Nations system.

Although born in Ottawa, Malone left Canada at the age of 4 with his globetrotting parents and had lived in four countries by the time he was 18: the Netherlands, Iran, Nigeria and finally France, where he attended boarding school.

“All four countries are very close to my heart still,” he said fondly, adding that it wasn’t until he returned to his country of birth for college that he started to develop his Canadian identity. Given his background, it is perhaps not surprising that Malone went on to work around the world in his diplomatic career, adding Egypt, Jordan, Syria, the USA and India to the countries he has called home.

“Much as I liked aspects of it, I didn’t want my life to be confined to diplomacy. I’d been a weak student when I was young, and it was only starting professional work that made me much more curious in terms of what I could learn academically. Once I’d started work, it came home to me how much I didn’t know,” he said with disarming honesty. “I thought, as I’m single and my own boss in that sense, I could try to fix that by going back to school whenever I can. That was the beginning of three stints in the world of research and universities.”

His introduction to his current position in Japan, which he has held since 2013, was refreshingly old school. “Actually, it was through reading an advertisement for the job in the Economist magazine! A lot of people think those job ads in the Economist are ‘for the record,’ rather than leading to actual jobs, but my last two positions came through reading the advertisements,” he said with a laugh.

Founded in 1975, UNU is hardly your typical university, either: It is a global think tank and postgraduate teaching organization that contributes to efforts to resolve global problems through collaborative research and education. The idea to create the university dates back to discussion in the U.N. General Assembly from the late 1960s and early 1970s, at a time when Japan was emerging as a global economic power.

“There were two U.N. agencies being created around that time: One was what became the U.N. Environment Programme, and the other was the idea of a U.N. institution devoted to ‘knowledge creation and curation,’” Malone explained.

There was also debate on what direction the university should take. “That had a fairly clear-cut outcome — that it focus primarily on challenges facing the developing world — and we have remained true to that vocation ever since,” said Malone. “Whether the work is carried out in Japan, Malaysia, New York or Venezuela, it has remained focused on the needs and interests of developing countries.”

While UNU is based in Tokyo, Malone notes that only about 15% of the work it oversees takes place in Japan. He and his team currently oversee about a dozen research (and five teaching) programs around the world.

“When you are small, like UNU, what you constantly need are fresh ideas,” he pointed out. “Our subject matter in each of our locations is relatively narrow, which allows us to field a small team of researchers to do groundbreaking work. If we choose a topic that’s a huge problem, or that is being dealt with already by 20,000 universities or companies, then we would have no comparative advantage.”

Much of UNU’s work is connected to the 17 sustainable development goals that were adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 2015 to inspire global action on various issues, from ending hunger and poverty to achieving equality and peace. By way of example, Malone mentions UNU’s work at its institute in Ghana, which is currently led by Gambian-born researcher Fatima Denton.

“It focuses on the management of natural resources in Africa, which has a huge sustainability element — not just environmental, but sustainability of the industries themselves,” Malone said. “This team has been working steadily on those issues for many years, and now that sustainability has risen on the global agenda, African governments are much keener to do something about the problems.”

On a personal level, he finds it “absolutely fascinating” to see the way foreign influence has played out in relation to Japan’s culture and values. “Japan has been influenced by outside forces at various times in its history, and it is very good at adapting foreign ideas, technologies or whatever to Japanese needs, tastes and interests to achieve terrific results, often the best in the world,” he said. “If you think of the fashion field, for example, Japan didn’t become creative beyond the textiles field just by making kimonos for many centuries, it became particularly creative when it was exposed to Western fashion, launching several of the world’s best-known brands.”

Malone makes a point of volunteering his services as a speaker at universities when he travels within Japan, which invariably take up his offer to address the students. He

Five languages, multiple degrees

David Malone was born in Ottawa but has lived and worked around the world. He holds multiple degrees, including a BAA from HEC Montreal, an MPA from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government and a D.Phil. in international relations from Oxford University. Prior to taking on his current position at the United Nations University, Malone served as president of Canada’s International Development Research Centre from 2008 to 2013. Among his other positions, he represented his home country as high commissioner to India while concurrently ambassador to Bhutan and Nepal from 2006 to 2008.

Malone has also held research and teaching posts at multiple academic institutions, including adjunct professor at the New York University School of Law. He has published extensively and speaks five languages. When time permits, he enjoys traveling to new places in Japan, particularly the national parks.

Name: David Malone

Title: Rector, United Nations University, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations

URL: <https://unu.edu/>

Hometown: Ottawa, Canada

Years in Japan: 8

also takes great interest in what Japan’s young people have to tell him, and notes that the rising generation are keen to know more about major issues such as sustainability.

In line with this, while praising Japan’s intake of foreign students, Malone expressed concern about the trend in recent years of young Japanese turning away from overseas study and said he would like to encourage more of them to move beyond their comfort level and expand their horizons by studying abroad. “Young people would benefit from engaging more with the greater world. It isn’t about how fabulous you are, but how fabulous you want to be — and what you’re doing about it!” he said with conviction.

● Summary

世界を維持するために様々な問題に取り組む

カナダ、オタワに生まれ、幼少期から家族と共に様々な国に暮らした経験のある、国連大学学長のデイビッド・マローン氏。同時に国連事務次長も務める。現職に就くまでも外交を中心に数々の要職を歴任したが、外交だけにとどまらず、カナダをはじめ米国、フランスなどの複数の大学で学び、経営学や行政学、国際関係といった多様な学位を取得。世界の諸問題、特に発展途上国における個別の課題解決に取り組むシンクタンクとしての国連大学では、

その幅広い知見と経験が生かされている。「特定の地域の比較的狭い対象分野に特化するからこそ小さなチームでも画期的な結果が出る」と語るマローン氏。国連大学が関わる事業の多くはSDGsに関連するものだが、日本国内の様々な大学での講演活動も行うマローン氏は、日本の若い世代の間でもサステナビリティへの関心は高まっているという。一方で、国外へ出たがらない昨今の若者に対し、世界と関わることで多くを得られるとエールを送った。



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All cattle raised on the farm are of the Jersey breed, which is native to the United Kingdom.
PHOTO: SHINRINNOBOKUJO

Feature | WOOD

FOOD

Transforming forest into a cattle ranch. Shinrin no Bokujo shows how the dairy industry can save forests

WRITER: ARINA TSUKADA

Two-thirds of Japan is covered with forest — approximately 24 million hectares in total. As of 2020, Japan had the third-highest percentage of forested land among OECD countries, according to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization. However, after years of reliance on cheap imports, the prices paid for local timber

Recently a project to create a pond in the forest began. Events that are open to the public are held regularly.

PHOTO: SHINRINNOBOKUJO



are now so low that many of Japan's forests lie unmanaged. Those include many of the plantation forests developed in large numbers after the war. Without being regularly thinned, they have become starved of light and denuded of living organisms. This has left their soil degraded, which in turn results in natural damage such as landslides. In order to preserve these abundant timber resources for the future, it is now becoming essential to manage them, often at a high cost.

One company sees dairy farming as a novel way to make use of these forests. Shinrin no Bokujo (Forest Ranch), which was created in 2009 in Nasu, Tochigi Prefecture, raises cows in mountain forests for milk and other dairy products. For company representative Masahiro Yamakawa, a long-held love of dairy farming is coming in handy for forestry management.

"Until now, basically the only way to make use of mountain resources was logging, but it occurred to me that maybe

dairy farming would be an alternative," he said. "Even in mountainous areas with no flat land where it is difficult to farm, if you have cows they are still able to walk around. We have found that the cows are actually more active and so produce more milk. These days the dairy industry imports large amounts of grain for livestock feeding, but our cows eat natural grass. As a result, the flavor of their milk naturally changes with the seasons, giving us something unique for our brand."

Naturally, there is a risk that grazing cattle might affect the local ecosystem. But, Yamakawa said, "rice paddies and fields are artificial, too — they were created by humans." He explained that "where land is managed by humans over a long period of time, as with rice fields, new and rich ecosystems develop. Dairy farms are the same, and if you make delicious milk and butter from them too, then business can be conducted while coexisting with nature. Currently, we are also experimenting with making biotope

(habitat) ponds at the ranch, and we are also researching new ecosystems created from the cows' manure."

The dairy business at Shinrin no Bokujo has grown steadily over the years, and they are now preparing to open a new ranch. "Consumers' tastes are diversifying," Yamakawa said. "It has also become easier to tell the story of our brand through social media, so more and more people are supporting our products because of the contribution we make to regeneration of (abandoned) forests. But, of course, first and foremost, the most important thing is for them to think that our product is delicious."

Yamakawa reports that for families who visit the ranch, the sight of cows walking freely through the forest is a thrill. Keeping the farm at a manageable scale, he is confident about continuing to develop original and unique dairy products. A dairy business producing delicious food in the forest may well become a model for a new circular economy.



Pasteurized Jersey milk that captures seasonal flavors.
PHOTO: SHINRINNOBOKUJO

● Summary

森林を牛が暮らす牧場に。乳製品づくりで森を守る。

日本の国土の2/3が森林である。しかし国産木材の価格が下がり、放置されたままの森林が日本全国にある。そうした中、森林活用として「酪農」に着目した会社がある。「森林ノ牧場」は、山間部の森林で牛を放牧している。「農業を行いにくい山間部でも、牛であれば歩き回ることがで

きる。牛の運動量も増え、ミルクの生産量もあがります。畜産業は家畜のエサのために大量の穀物を輸入していますが、うちの牛たちは放牧地で自然に生える草を食べています。すると四季によって牛乳の風味も移り変わり、酪農ブランドとしての個性を出せるようになりました」と代表の山川将弘氏は語る。

もちろん、牛を放牧することで土地の生態系に影響を与える恐れもある。現在、牧場内ではビオトープづくりを実践中で、牛の糞などから生まれる新たな生態系の調査も行っている。森林でおいしい食品をつくる酪農ビジネスは、新たなサーキュラー・エコノミーのモデルとなっていくかもしれない。

ESG TALK

jt

This article was published on June 28 at The Japan Times

PHOTO: YUICO TAIYA FOR PHOTOMATE



Hasebe with Japan Times publisher Minako Suematsu. Before becoming CEO, he led Kao Corp.'s research and development and strategic innovative technology as vice president.

Rivals become partners tackling environmental issues

WRITER: TOMOKO KAICHI CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Kao, a major Japanese maker of home products and cosmetics, announced its medium-term business plan at the end of 2020. Environmental, social and governance activities — collectively known as ESG — feature prominently in the plan, which aims to both contribute to creating a sustainable society and achieve business growth. Yoshihiro Hasebe, who this past January became president of Kao in the first year of the plan, has promised to lead the company to become a “presence essential for our society as a company that protects lives in the future.”

“My top priority as president is to make Kao into a company that embodies what an ESG-aware company is all about,” Hasebe said.

Founded in 1887, Kao has offered suggestions for new lifestyles throughout its long history of product development. Many of its products have anticipated today's increased awareness about ESG. One is Attack, the world's first compact-box powder laundry detergent, introduced in 1987, which Hasebe says he is proud of for “taking Kao the farthest forward” as a company. The product is claimed to require only a “spoonful,” or one-fourth the amount of conventional products, to wash a load of laundry. It realized the convenience of a box of detergent that lasts a long time. Kao was also able to make the product's box less than one-fourth the size of conventional products, radically altering the image of detergent boxes as heavy and bulky. It significantly reduced the stress of doing the laundry. “It made people feel much less reluctant to do the laundry and, ultimately, changed the way of overall Japanese culture,” according to Hasebe.

After the debut of Attack, compact-box detergent products came into wide use in the United States and Europe. Such smaller, lighter products also had a significant impact on the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions associated with their transportation.

● Summary

業界一丸で環境保全を推進、事業の成長と両立を宣言。

花王は2020年末に25年度までの中期経営計画を発表し、持続可能な社会への貢献と事業の成長の両立を打ち出した。今年1月に社長に就任した長谷部佳宏氏は、「本当の意味でESGを体現した会社にしていく」と覚悟を語る。

1887年創業の花王は、ESGを先取りした商品も多い。1987年発売の世界初のコンパクト粉末洗剤「アタック」は、必要な洗剤の量を減らして容器を小型・軽量化、輸送時の二酸化炭素排出量の削減に

Advances in detergents

Kao has continued to improve on Attack, which has maintained the top spot in Japan's laundry detergent market for over three decades. Attack Neo, an “ultra-concentrated liquid laundry detergent” introduced in 2009, comes in a bottle smaller than existing products, achieved by increasing the liquid's concentration. This helped reduce the amount of plastic used for the bottles. And thanks to a newly developed cleaning agent, laundry washed with Attack Neo requires only a single rinse cycle. The product thus enabled less water to be used in washing and, ultimately, significantly cut emissions of carbon dioxide. Attack Neo was well received by consumers for its potential to reduce water bills and for its touted image of allowing “anyone to take part in efforts to conserve the environment,” Hasebe said. Endorsing this, appliance makers started introducing washing machines with settings that have only a single rinse cycle, rather than two. Such a feature is now standard in virtually all models on the market.

Hasebe, who was involved in the development of Attack Neo from the initial planning phase, said he had a strong sense of crisis about the environment at the time. The innovative product was born through a process of trial and error, he said.

“What we need to do is envision the future,” he said. “I think what we should do is the things only Kao — not any of the global giants — can do, either working with other companies or leading them by example.”

Recycling PET bottles

Kao, like many consumer product manufacturers, uses large amounts of plastic in containers and packaging materials, which is why the company sees helping create a plastic-recycling society as an especially important mission. A recent example is its use of 100% recycled polyethylene terephthalate (PET) for the bottles of its Attack Zero detergent, launched this April. The company has begun increasing the use of

寄与した。液体洗剤も濃縮化による本体ボトルの小型化とプラスチック使用量の削減、水使用量を減らす「すすぎ1回」などを実現し、新商品は100%再生PETボトルを採用した。

使用済みプラスチック容器の回収とリサイクルなど、環境保全に必要と判断すれば競合他社とも手を組み、そのための技術も共有する。「モノづくり企業にとって環境問題対策は不可欠。業界一丸で取り組もうという考え方が広がっている」と期待する。

recycled plastic in earnest and plans to switch all of the PET bottles for its home products that are used in large quantities in Japan to recycled PET by 2025.

Kao is not averse to working with rival manufacturers if it is good for the environment. This past May, the company announced a deal with Unilever Japan on the separation and collection of waste plastic containers for home products, including detergents and shampoos. Kao also began working with Lion Corp. in 2020 on a similar initiative for refill containers. “Rivals that are making great products are our best partners,” Hasebe said. “Recycling and environmental issues are something manufacturers must deal with, but there's only so much a company can do by itself. Rivals may compete with each other in terms of what's inside the containers, but it's ‘no side’ when it comes to containers after the product has been used up, to use a rugby term. There is a growing view that we will be better off if companies across the industry work together.”

Kao is also working on a project to recycle contaminated or colored PET materials, which are difficult to recycle into packaging materials, as an asphalt modifier. Added in very small amounts, the material improves the durability of asphalt pavement. It can make asphalt, which typically requires repaving every decade, last five decades, according to Hasebe. It has the added benefit of reducing the amount of microplastic released from paved road surfaces and, therefore, their impact on the sea. The asphalt modifier has already been used in the paving of parking lots and repaving of roads controlled by local gov-

ernments, according to Hasebe.

“We have worked with many partners to get (this technology) to be introduced more widely, and we have made a proposal for a technology-sharing structure to the Ministry of the Environment,” he said.

Fast health checks via skin oil

Hasebe, who has worked in technology fields for many years, says he is now particularly excited about a Kao technology called RNA monitoring. A Kao researcher found that sebum — skin oil — contains RNA. Analysis of sebum rubbed onto a blotting film can reveal the status of a person's health and immune functions, as well as enable detection of signs of diseases such as Parkinson's, diabetes and infections. “It's not sufficient for an elderly person to undergo health checks only once a year if that person's healthy life expectancy is to be extended, but with this technology you can look into the health status easily and at low cost,” Hasebe said. “I hope to make this technology widely available to the general public before my term as president expires.”

Hasebe says he is also excited about Japan's technologies for frozen food and fake meat, although they are not Kao's. “I think it would be great if Japan's technology to restore frozen foods in a short time and its food culture could serve as catalysts for changing the environmental and waste issues of the world,” he said, pointing out that these technologies enhance the enjoyment of eating and reduce food waste at the same time. The potential for new lifestyles from Japan is growing, starting from a no side to an initiative transcending industry boundaries.

the japan times

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2021

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7月15日～ 8月15日

What is the Sustainable Japan Award?

In 2017, The Japan Times launched two consortiums, the “ESG Consortium” and the “Satoyama Consortium”. The consortiums have focused on individuals, companies, and organizations who have been active in various positions to realize a sustainable society, including key persons who are active in Japan and overseas, and who have disseminated their efforts both domestically and internationally. The first “Satoyama & ESG Award” was held in 2019. Three years later, the name of the award changed to the “Sustainable Japan Award” with both a Satoyama section and an ESG section established within it. Our goal is to commend individuals, companies, and organizations who have made advances in sustainable efforts, and we hope to convey their activities both domestically and internationally.

Sustainable Japan Awardとは

株式会社ジャパンタイムズでは、2017年に2つのコンソーシアム、「ESG推進コンソーシアム」と「Satoyama推進コンソーシアム」を立ち上げ、国内外で活躍するキーパーソンをはじめ、持続可能な社会の実現のために様々な立場で活躍してきた企業や団体そして個人をフォーカスし、その取り組みを国内外に発信してきました。2019年に第1回目を実施した「Satoyama & ESG Award」。3回目となる今年から、「Sustainable Japan Award」と名称を変更し、その中でSatoyama部門、ESG部門を設け、これまで同様、その年に先進的なそして持続可能な取り組みを行なった企業、団体、個人を表彰し、その活躍を国内外に伝えていきます。

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Contact:
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Organizer:
Japan Times Cube Co. Ltd.
“Sustainable Japan Award” executive office

PHOTO: MIYO-ORGANIC-



This bamboo toothbrush is organic and also makes use of bamboo nodes, which have few other applications. The product is environmentally conscious right down to the paper for its wrapping, made from bamboo offcuts.

Feature | WOOD

GOODS

Bamboo products used by the Japanese since ancient times are full of wisdom for improving our lives

WRITER: AI SAKAMOTO



Miyo Yamamoto, founder of the brand MiYO-organic

PHOTO: MIYO-ORGANIC-

Bamboo is attracting attention as an alternative to plastic and wood. Light, durable and easy to process, bamboo has been used since ancient times in Japan for daily necessities such as baskets and colanders, as well as craft items and building materials. Bamboo tools have even been found in Jomon Period ruins from approximately 4,000 years ago.

Bamboo is an attractive material because it reproduces and grows so rapidly. Once a year, new shoots emerge from nodes in rhizomes underground, and they can grow into mature bamboo in just a few months. Sometimes bamboo can grow more than a meter per day, and be ready to harvest in just three years. Compared to wood, its regeneration cycle is very fast.

However, as plastics became common in the period of rapid economic growth in the 1960s, demand for bamboo declined, and it is only in recent years that bamboo has been reevaluated as a sustainable, decomposable material.

In the movement to find new uses for bamboo, including as biomass fuel or for bamboo-based paper and other next-generation materials, one curious new product was released in December: a bamboo toothbrush from MiYO-organic.

“In the winter of 2018, while I was on a business trip, I noticed the plastic toothbrush in the hotel and how it was used just twice — once in the evening and once in the morning — before being discarded. It occurred to me that this was happening all over the world, and a massive amount of garbage was being generated. That was the beginning, and I decided to take the opportunity to make a toothbrush that was comfortable to use, fashionable and environmentally friendly,” said Miyo Yamamoto, the brand’s founder.

Made from carefully selected *mōsō* tortoise-shell bamboo, the toothbrush is neither colored nor painted. It is made with an organic method that uses no bleach or fungicides. The nylon for the bristles is

BPA-free. The head is small enough to suit Japanese mouths, and the reasonable price allows for everyday use.

Other unique new products include some using traditional bamboo charcoal for its deodorizing and moisture-absorbing qualities. Chikuno Life’s small deodorant Chikuno Cubes have sides dotted with countless small hexagonal holes. By shaping powdered bamboo charcoal into a honeycomb structure to increase surface area, its deodorizing and moisture-absorbing effects are significantly enhanced. In addition to having a modern design suited to contemporary lifestyles, the product can also be maintained by simply putting it out in the sun once a year.

In recent years, untended bamboo forests have spread uncontrollably, crowding out surrounding vegetation. That problem, as well as the problem of our need for more sustainable materials, could well find a common solution in the future.



Bamboo grows to harvestable size in roughly three years, so it has a much faster regeneration cycle than wood.

PHOTO: MIYO-ORGANIC-



PHOTO: CHIKUNO LIFE

Chikuno Cubes deodorize and control humidity. A single cube is effective for a room of up to 6 mats in size (10 square meters), and they are also pet-friendly.

● Summary

竹製品には、生活をよくする知恵が詰まっています。

プラスチックや木材の代替物として、竹が注目を集めている。軽くて丈夫、加工しやすいので、日本では古くから竹を活用してきた。その魅力は生育の早さにある。約3年で加工用に使える、一般の木に比べ、再生サイクルの早い循環型の素材と言える。(MiYO-organic-)の竹歯ブラシは着色も塗装もなし。ブラシ

部分のナイロン素材には、環境ホルモン的一种と言われるBPA(ビスフェノールA)不使用のものを採用している。

一方、消臭や調湿に効果のある、伝統的な竹炭を使ったユニークな商品もある。「CHIKUNO CUBE / AIR FOR」は、粉末にした竹炭をハニカム構造にして表面積を増やすことで、消臭・

調湿の効果を格段に上げているという。

近年、放置された竹林が、その強い繁殖力から無秩序に広がり、周囲の植生に影響を与える「竹害」が問題視されている。サステナブルな素材としてのニーズの高まりと、竹林の整備。この2つを解決していくことが、今後の課題となるだろう。

Time Capsule



This article was published on June 21 at The Japan Times

ESG/SDGs



This article was published on July 5 at The Japan Times

Actors and the Kabuki Today

NIPPON TIMES MAGAZINE, JULY 20, 1946



THE JAPAN TIMES, SEPTEMBER 2, 2007

125 YEARS Special Contents

Kabuki, kyogen, noh, traditional theater

BRAND HISTORY & ARCHIVE



The theatrical arts are perhaps one of the most enduring traditions of Japan, and from the mid-20th century, The Japan Times has showcased the stories and the stars of the stage, from kabuki and noh to rakugo and kyogen.

In the 1940s and '50s, Maj. Faubion Bowers, who wrote features explaining the context of Japanese theater on numerous occasions for The Japan Times, had a major effect in preserving traditional theatrical arts' place on the world stage. As Gen.

Douglas MacArthur's personal Japanese translator, he was able to convince the Occupation forces not to ban kabuki performances, which were thought to be promoting feudal-era values.

Until the present day, The Japan Times has provided rare glimpses into the minds of theater masters, whose craft has been passed down through generations.

● Summary

歌舞伎、狂言、能、伝統芸能

20世紀半ばから、歌舞伎、能、落語、狂言などの伝統芸能を紹介してきたジャパントイムズ。1940年代から50年代にかけて、演劇の背景に関する特集記事をジャパントイムズに何度も寄稿したフォービオン・パウエル元帥は、日本の伝統的演劇を世界の舞台に残すことに大きな役割を果たした。

マッカーサー元帥の個人秘書として、また専属日本語通訳として、占領軍が封建的価値観を助長すると考え歌舞伎の上演を禁止しないように説得したのだ。ジャパントイムズは、これまでもそしてこれから、世代を超えて受け継がれてきた伝統芸能の「心」、そして巨匠たちの「思い」を伝え続けている。

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詳しくはこちら

Recent actions by the Japanese government signal a potential tailwind in the transition to a low-carbon economy.

In May, Japan's parliament enshrined into law Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's pledge to reach carbon neutrality by 2050 with legislative measures for investment in green technology and renewable energy projects. The establishment of this legislation and related targets, including a pledge to slash greenhouse gas emissions by 46% from the 2013 level by 2030, indicates a push to align Japan's economy with the government's sustainability goals.

The role of finance will be key in this process, according to Green Finance Network Japan (GFNJ), whose stated mission is to provide a platform for the public and private sectors to engage in dialogue and find ways to enhance green investment — financial activity that is struc-

tured to ensure positive environmental outcomes.

GFNJ's most recent symposium was held on June 19 and invited representatives from MUFG Bank and Mizuho Holdings, as well as from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry; the Financial Services Agency; and the Ministry of the Environment, among others. Under the overarching theme of “Sustainable Finance,” participants discussed global trends regarding carbon neutrality and the role finance should play.

The symposium opened with a video-recorded message by Shinjiro Koizumi (Minister of the Environment) and keynote speeches from GFNJ cofounder Takejiro Sueyoshi (special adviser to the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative) and Naoko Ishii (director of the Center for Global Commons, University of Tokyo).

Symposium examines role of finance in path to sustainability

WRITER: JOE MUNTAL CONTRIBUTING WRITER



Shinjiro Koizumi, minister of the environment



Naoko Ishii, director of the Center for Global Commons, University of Tokyo



Takejiro Sueyoshi, special adviser to the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative

In his speech, Sueyoshi expressed concern about Japan's lacking a sense of urgency regarding climate change. He observed that although conversations about environmental considerations have become more frequent, such as in the form of SDG targets, these conversations have yet to translate into substantial systemic change. Citing a landmark German court ruling that the government's deferring of cuts in emissions to after 2030 violated the freedom of the young plaintiffs, Sueyoshi suggested Japan follow suit and situate the notion of human rights at the center of decarbonization efforts.

Ishii echoed Sueyoshi's call for a more aggressive approach to decarbonization. She further elaborated that any action to combat climate change must be part of a holistic approach to restore balance between the current economic forces and the planetary capacity, which only can be achieved through transformation of key economic systems. There needs to be a “greening” of the financial system to drive economic transition so that we can save ourselves away from the point of no return, she said.

Following the keynote speeches was a panel discussion among government representatives and financiers moderated by GFNJ Secretary-General Hideki Takada (Counsellor, Climate Change Office, Cabinet Secretariat). In addition to conversa-

tions regarding ESG (environmental, social and governance) metrics, representatives from the Financial Services Agency, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry discussed initiatives to revitalize local economies through green technology investments. Representatives from MUFG Bank and Dai-ichi Life Holdings also detailed plans to reach net zero emissions across their portfolios.

A lively topic of discussion was the role of government regulation in encouraging sustainable investment. Considering that Japan currently has no plans to issue green bonds and that there is still an air of uncertainty surrounding sustainable investments and their potential return on investment, Mana Nakazora of the French international financial group BNP Paribas said the government should implement more aggressive regulation to encourage sustainable investment. An example of such regulation would be mandating that half of all assets under management fulfill ESG criteria, she said.

In his closing remarks, GFNJ cofounder Sueyoshi explained that the demands to respond to climate change and environmental issues will only become more stringent. “There needs to be a consistent sense of urgency regarding the state of the planet and the severe competitive environment to come,” he said.

● Summary

持続可能社会の実現へ、高まる金融の役割と課題。

日本で5月、菅義偉首相が掲げる2050年までのカーボンニュートラル達成目標を明記し、グリーンテクノロジーや再生可能エネルギー計画への投資を促進する法律が成立した。経済発展をとまらぬ低炭素社会への移行に追い風となる可能性がある。

グリーン・ファイナンス・ネットワーク・ジャパン (GFNJ) は、金融機関や政府の代表者を招いたシンポジウムを開催し、目標達成に向けた金融の役割などを話し合った。GFNJ 発起人で国連環境計画・金融イ

ニシアティブ特別顧問の末吉竹二郎氏は、環境保全に関する議論が活発化したことを評価する一方で、制度改革など実質的な変化につながっていないことを指摘。気候変動や環境問題に一層の危機感を持って取り組む必要があると訴えた。参加者からは、金融システムの「グリーン化」やESG投資を後押しする仕組みや規制作り、グリーンテクノロジー投資による地域経済活性化への早急な行動を求める意見が聞かれ、金融機関や政府代表者が進捗と方針を説明した。



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