Green Japan: Building a Future with Young People

Review the future

Since the Industrial Revolution in the UK, our world has obtained sufficient development to date by utilizing petroleum as fuel and products, and life would not be possible without petroleum products. Clothes and suits are made of synthetic fibers, and plastic is used in smartphones and computers. However, in Japan and around the world, extreme weather events have caused record numbers of wildfires, floods, and droughts. In Europe, the Seine River has dried up, and in Japan, the largest typhoon ever hit the country, causing massive flooding. In the past, vague fears such as global warming and the ozone hole have caused real damage to society and daily life, and these fears are now being clearly expressed as numbers in the market.

In response to these anxieties, up to the root cause, young people have raised their voices against corporations and governments through policy proposals and demonstrations, pursuing a shift to concrete, feasible environmental conservation activities based on rational processes.

However, young people do not have the economic power of corporations, the expertise of scientists, or the constitutional power of governments to address these issues. Therefore, immature people can only make policy proposals and present their opinions at opinion exchange meetings. This is especially true in Japanese society, where young people who express dissatisfaction with environmental issues need to leave their jobs and their activities to pursue more immediate career progress and dietary concerns.

I have always believed that the limitation of activities that young people in Japan and the rest of the world can engage in is policy advocacy. In particular, although 25% of the world's population is classified as youth under the age of 24, many governments had in the past made policy decisions based solely on the opinions of corporations and interest groups outside of this age group.

However, through the Stockholm +50 International Conference in Sweden, UNFCCC SB56 in Germany, and the UN Oceans Conference in Portugal, we have seen that youth can play a role not only in policy advocacy, but also in connecting between sectors such as business, government, and civil society, and in promoting activities as a neutral or role model for business and government I realized that youth can promote not only policy advocacy but also a review of the activities of companies and governments by promoting activities as a neutral or role-playing entity. In particular, through the activities of the Youth Task Force and Youth-led NGOs, which are youth organizations participating in UN agencies, we have learned that many companies and governments need us to present issues from a neutral standpoint through social communication of reviews that include youth perspectives.
Until now, evaluations of corporate activities and government have been conducted by ombudsmen, labor unions, and rating agencies that conduct corporate evaluations. However, evaluations that adapt to the diverse values of today cannot be conducted through conventional centralized evaluations, and it is necessary to present perspectives from a more flexible and neutral standpoint. Therefore, many industries need to incorporate perspectives from other areas of the industry through youth reviews and unbiased recommendations for the future.

Today, many companies have set up evaluations that clearly identify their commitment to environmental issues and society as ESD investments to show that they are working to protect the environment, while some companies have experienced a surge in damage from greenwashing, which is an activity that is only an apparent commitment. I believe that now is now time for young people to be in a position to monitor and evaluate the efforts of companies and governments and to promote activities that will help remake the future into a better one. In particular, I believe that by collaborating with scientists on the technical aspects, with labor and civil society on the economic aspects, and with organizations designated under the ombudsman system on the policy aspects, we can promote activities that will allow us to think about our future together with all the organizations of today. Also, by collaborating with national and international organizations, I predict that we can advance activities such as environmental conservation activities by presenting the results of micro-analysis through the activities of young people.

I am convinced that such activities can not only be carried out no matter what kind of work or activity one is doing but can also establish social significance because of the positive contribution they can make to the local community.

This year, the United Nations resolved to officially launch a Youth Office, and many young people were thrilled by that resolution, and discussions are underway regarding the establishment of a position whereby government agencies, international organizations, and international NGOs can advance the review by establishing a youth quota within their organizations. I believe that now is the time for the youth to utilize the vague concerns they have been promoting and the activities they have been engaged in the date to disseminate proposals for building a better society through such corporate and government reviews so that we can build a new society and future that we can create with the youth.

In Japan, such activities are currently being promoted, and not only are youth activities related to climate change countermeasures being actively aired in the media but also government initiatives are being reviewed and proposals for government initiatives are being made through the setting up of opinion exchange meetings. This is a tendency toward building a better society in Japan. I forecast that we can build a sustainable society by reviewing existing institutions and activities neutrally and expanding activities to modify them for the better, as a future to be created with these young people.