

Welcome Address



Sir Graham Fry
British Ambassador to Japan

Mr. Kamoshita, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for inviting me to say a few words at the opening of this symposium. I can remember clearly standing on a platform with one of Mr. Kamoshita's predecessors, when we first launched this joint research project, and I am delighted that Minister Kamoshita has so enthusiastically continued Japanese support for it. We have done a number of UK-Japan projects on climate change, and I think this one may be the most valuable, partly because it involves not only the UK and Japan but many other countries as well.

There is sometimes what seems to me a slightly strange argument about whether one should tackle this problem with what is called a top-down approach or with what is called a bottom-up approach. The top-down approach means that you set an overall target, and we all know that Mr. Abe proposed a 50% global reduction by 2050. The European Union has set clear overall targets for itself. The bottom-up approach is to look at individual things which you can do and add them all together - whether it is energy efficiency or new technology or whatever. It seems to me a strange argument because it seems to me obvious that you need both. Only the top-down target can tell you whether you are doing enough to solve the problem, but without the bottom-up approach, working out individual measures, you won't solve the problem. You have to do things as well as targeting things. The value of this workshop is to look at what things you can do in order to meet a particular vision of the future. When you set big targets they can look very hard to achieve. Nobody wants to give up economic growth or economic development; so I think we need to offer a vision of how you can achieve the target without tremendously negative consequences.

I think the first two UK-Japan Low Carbon Society workshops were very successful in looking at low carbon scenarios for particular countries and feeding the results into discussions at other international meetings. The subjects under the discussion this time - behaviour change, sustainable development, investment frameworks and particular industries like steel and cement - are critical elements of transition to the low carbon society, and the output from this workshop will be fed into the G8 process later this year.

What seems to me very important, and what I hope you will do, is also to explain your ideas to ordinary people and to the general public. It is good if leaders understand these things, but a lot of other people also need to understand low carbon societies. The more that we can popularize the concept and the more that we can explain it through the media and other channels, then the more we can get people to understand what the future will look like.

So let me finish by thanking the Japanese Ministry of the Environment and specially thanking everybody who has taken such an active and enthusiastic part in the workshop. Thank you all very much indeed.