

CARVING OUT THE FUTURE:

A POLICY SPEECH BY PM KISHIDA

AN EXCERPT

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Having received a vote of confidence from the people, I will take on the extremely difficult challenges of overcoming COVID-19 and carving out a new era, together with my fellow members of the Diet and my fellow citizens.

Overcoming COVID-19; economic countermeasures for pioneering a new era

The important thing is to assume the worst-case scenario. In order to respond to the risk of the Omicron variant, we have taken the decision to suspend the entry of foreign nationals, applicable to the entire world. I am prepared to bear all the criticism that, although the situation is still not well understood, this is excessively cautious. We adhere to the position that we will respond in a careful, cautious manner. I made the decision to prepare for a spread of infections, and we have injected government funds at a scale of 13 trillion yen.

At the same time, we will provide careful assistance at a scale of 17 trillion yen to individuals and business operators who are in severely trying situations because of COVID-19.

That said, the world is changing dramatically in terms of digitalization and responses to the issue of climate change. We have injected government funds at a scale of 20 trillion yen, and Japan will take a major step forward towards carving out a new era.

On the basis of this clear idea, we have named these large-scale measures at 55.7 trillion yen in total size the “economic measures to overcome COVID-19 and pioneer a new era.”

Responses to COVID-19

I am determined to restore peace of mind to the public

and protect the lives and health of our citizens to the end.

First, we will ensure that our medical treatment structure is solidly in place, with the next increase in the number of cases firmly in mind.

Second, we will lower the threat of COVID-19 to the greatest possible extent as society as a whole. We will fundamentally strengthen the entire course of progression from prophylaxis and discovery to early treatment by making vaccines, screening, and orally administered therapeutics much more widespread.

The third is preparing a long-running system for responding to infectious disease crises.

Support for economic recovery

Because of COVID-19, we will support through subsidies households that are in difficult economic straits, university students in severe economic circumstances, and households raising children. For business operators, we will vigorously support measures for business revival.

Based on a policy of loosening restrictions on activities through the use of vaccines and testing as a package, we will work to restart socioeconomic activities that are close to normal.

A “new form of capitalism” that carves out our future society

What I aim for once we have overcome the crisis caused by COVID-19 is the realization of a “new form of capitalism.”

The first point is our Growth Strategy. The public and private sectors will together play their roles and collaborate in making bold investments for growth.

(1) Innovation

We will promote innovations achieved through science and technology and increase the economy’s ability to

create added value, while also dramatically strengthening the ecosystem surrounding start-ups. We will also actively undertake university reform and establish a university fund of 10 trillion yen within this fiscal year.

(2) A Vision for a Digital Garden City Nation

The “Vision for a Digital Garden City Nation” will use digitalization to advance the revitalization of local areas and additionally bring about bottom-up growth, moving from our regions to the nation as a whole.

(3) The issue of climate change

As we work towards achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 and realizing a 46 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, we will review restrictions on the maximum introduction of renewable energy while pushing forward with bold investments in the field of clean energy.

(4) Economic security

With a view to further enhancing the resilience of the supply chain and better ensuring the reliability of core infrastructure, we will aim to submit new bills to next year’s ordinary session of the Diet, based on consultations with the ruling coalition.

We will establish Japan’s economic security, and at the same time call in private-sector investment into these fields, thereby realizing economic growth.

Distributions to people are not a cost, but rather an investment towards the future. Through the public and private sectors playing their respective roles together, we distribute the fruits of growth properly. At the same time, stimulating consumption leads to the next round of growth.

The government will take the initiative and raise salaries in fields such as medical nursing, nursing care, child care, and preschool education. Beyond that, we will make all-out efforts to prepare an environment that supports wage increases at private companies.

In order to make investments in human resources more active, we will newly establish a package of measures at a scale of 400 billion yen over three years.

Diplomacy and security

I will visit the United States at the earliest possible date and meet with President Biden for talks, further reinforcing the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. Working together with like-minded

countries in ASEAN, Europe, and elsewhere, and utilizing the Quad among Japan, the United States, Australia, and India, we will deepen our cooperation towards realizing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

I am determined to work extensively on maintaining and strengthening the international order, which is based on universal values and rules including dealing with international human rights issues.

In order to protect the lives and livelihoods of the Japanese people, we will realistically examine all options, including possessing what is called “enemy base attack capability,” without excluding any possibilities, and, with a sense of speed, fundamentally reinforce our defense capabilities. Towards this end, over the course of roughly a year we will draw up a new National Security Strategy, National Defense Program Guidelines, and a Mid-Term Defense Program.

To enable us to move even one step closer to a world free of nuclear weapons, we will advance realistic efforts based on trust and cooperation between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states.

The abductions issue is one of the highest priority issues. We will make all-out efforts to bring about the return of all abductees to Japan at the earliest possible date. Japan seeks to normalize relations with North Korea, through the settling of the “unfortunate past” and the comprehensive resolution of the outstanding issues of concern with North Korea, such as the abductions, nuclear, and missile issues.

Disaster response

Another important mission for the government is protecting citizens’ lives, property, and livelihoods from disasters. We are strengthening our efforts to prevent and reduce disasters and enhance national resilience.

We will continue to make all-out efforts towards reconstruction from the Great East Japan Earthquake while staying attentive to the voices of those in the disaster-stricken areas.

Conclusion

I am fully convinced that Japan will be able to change significantly by each of us demonstrating our potential to the full and resolutely continuing to take on challenges.

Together, let us carry out our responsibilities to the next generation and carve out a future of Japan in which we can take pride on the global stage. ●