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NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL IN JAPAN

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We Protest Against the Cabinet Approval of the Release of Tritium-Contaminated Water from Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant into the Ocean

To Mr. SUGA Yoshihide, Prime Minister of Japan,
Mr. KAJIYAMA Hiroshi, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry

We Christians learn from the Bible that "Human beings were created in God's image" (Genesis 1:26-27) to "rule over" all life (Gen. 1:28), not to dominate nature to satisfy our greed, but to fulfill our appointed mission to "work (*âbad*<in Hebrew>= serve) and take care of" (Genesis. 2:15) Earth, so all of creation including humans might live mutually, in harmony.

It is possible to say, one of humanity's greatest rebellions against this teaching is the invention and use of nuclear weapons. In August of 1945, Japan experienced the tyranny of humanity through the tragedy of assault by two nuclear bombs. Out of this history of calamitous suffering, a beacon of peace and opposition against nuclear weapons was raised from Japan.

In spite of this, and even though humans have failed with any technology to fully control nuclear power's harmful effects or dangers, Japan went on to promote nuclear power policies under the sanitized label of "peaceful use" and built nuclear power plants across a land with many active fault lines that can cause major earthquakes, often in locations vulnerable to tsunami damage. This is what led to the worst possible situation at the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant on March 11, 2011, and to the shattering of the myth that "nuclear power is safe." Because of this nuclear accident at Fukushima, countries far from Japan have awakened to the lie of the "peaceful use" myth, and have made bold policy changes to choose the path of denuclearization.

Learning nothing from such history, Japan continues to pursue a nuclear power policy, revealing the "systemic irresponsibility" of this country's political realm. The first thing that must be pointed out is, Japan shirked its responsibility as the only country in the world to be attacked by nuclear weapon to independently join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was ratified last October and came into force in January 2021, giving as its reason, "protection under the nuclear umbrella of the United States." Another is the revelation of startlingly sloppy security management at TEPCO's Kashiwazaki Kariwa Nuclear Power Plant, a story exposed by media since March 18th and shocking to residents of Japan. One cannot help but ask; How deep is the darkness of irresponsibility that is borne by Japan's nuclear administrators for pressing ahead with atomic and nuclear power, which cannot be managed or controlled even by bringing together humanity's highest knowledge?

On April 13th, the Suga Cabinet approved the release into the ocean of more than 1.25 million tons of



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radioactive waste water that was steadily accumulated from the melted nuclear fuel debris of Reactors 1 and 3 of the TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, which were destroyed in 2011 and have remained unapproachable to anyone since then. The reason given was that the 1,061 storage tanks installed within the grounds would be completely filled in another two years. If this decision is carried out from 2023, radioactive tritium (β rays) produced by 200 tons of nuclear fuel debris that still contains a total 856 trillion becquerels of radioactivity, which cannot even be removed by an Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS), would be released into the Pacific Ocean over the next 30 to 40 years.

We harbor deep questions about the following points in the government's explanation, and express protest:

1. The government explains that, compared to the 60,000 becquerels-per-litre standard established for the release of tritium, what will be released from Fukushima Daiichi will be held to 1/40 of that standard, or 1,500 bq/l, by diluting it with sea water. Actually, however, this is a standard that is apportioned to tritium, which takes into consideration other radioactive materials contained in the emission water, such as strontium 90. The government has not conveyed this fact accurately and, intending only to ease people's concerns, the end effect will be to cause misunderstanding;
2. Given that the choice to release Fukushima Daiichi's tritium-contaminated water into the ocean was made because current storage tanks will reach their capacity 2 years hence, discussion of the volume and dilution standard of tritium to be released cannot avoid obvious rationalization. Rather, we cannot avoid harboring suspicion that the government is concerned that abandonment of the release of Fukushima Daiichi's tritium-contaminated water into the ocean might affect the ocean release of wastewater from the Rokkasho Nuclear Fuel Reprocessing Facility in Aomori Prefecture, which will require the ocean release of far greater volumes of tritium-contaminated water than Fukushima.
3. The government claims that there is no path other than to release tritium-contaminated water into the ocean, but experts point to alternative possibilities, such as on-land storage in robust, large tanks, or by means of mortar solidification. The government's recent cabinet decision made no effort to consider such possibilities.
4. The government's recent cabinet decision to release contaminated water into the ocean is an arbitrary decision, which sorely lacked explanation to local people engaged in fishing, who will surely suffer unnecessary reputational damage.
5. The government explains, not only in its discussion of standards for tritium contamination, but also regarding tritium's effects on the human body and the environment, that the energy of tritium is weak, and that it is expelled by the human body without accumulating for long. However, according to Dr. NISHIO Masamichi, Director Emeritus of the Hokkaido Cancer Center, which performs detailed research on internal radiation caused by radioactive materials, the dangers of tritium remain unclear and, he warns, tritium causes grave internal radiation to the human body by changing into "organically bound tritium" within the human body.

The Japanese government has often stated, in defense of its decision, that nuclear power plants of Japan and



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around the world have already released immeasurable volumes of tritium-contaminated water into the oceans. For the purpose of stopping the destruction of life and Earth by radioactive contamination, what legitimate meaning can there be in the government's use of such a reference to justify its own release of contaminated water into the ocean?

On April 8, 2021, at the 2nd hearing of the "Religious people's court action to demand cessation of nuclear fuel cycle operations," one of the litigants read from a preparatory brief that referred to the Bible passage, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Exodus 20:17), and which stated that the evil harms of nuclear power plants and nuclear fuel cycle operations are sins of human greed (litigant KATAOKA Terumi). Indeed, one can only say that nuclear power operations until now have been a sin of human greed against precious life and the ecology of a beautiful natural environment, paying no heed to their destructive effects.

"Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live." (Ezekiel 47:9)

We must once again retrieve the spirit of awe and care toward life and nature, so that life and nature's ecology on Earth, which have been exposed to and contaminated by such disastrously destructive actions, can flow again like a pure river. We must, with courage and wisdom, choose a path of emancipation from our enslavement by a civilization of greed, which continues disastrously destructive acts against life and environment.

For the reasons above, we protest against the Japanese government's cabinet decision to release tritium-contaminated water into the ocean, and strongly demand withdrawal of the decision.

April 15, 2021

Rev. Dr. KIM Sungjae
General Secretary

Rev. NAITO Shingo
Chairperson, Peace and Nuclear Issues Committee