

Recent Development in S&T Policy

Taizo Yakushiji

Executive Member of the Council for Science and Technology Policy,
Cabinet Office, The Government of Japan

Abstract

In January 2001, under the Hashimoto Cabinet, the Council for Science and Technology Policy (CSTP) was incorporated into the Cabinet Office, together with other councils such as the Economic and Fiscal Council. The CSTP is chaired by the Prime Minister and meetings are held monthly at the Prime Minister's Office. Functions of the CSTP include the prioritization of science and technology-related programs and their budgets, proposed by some seven ministers and agencies. The key role of the CSTP is to draft the Basic Science and Technology Plan which encompasses each subsequent five year period. The Fundamental Law of Science and Technology of 1995 serves as the legal backbone for setting out such Basic Science and Technology Plans.

The CSTP's power base is such that the CSTP, independent of and in cooperation with other ministries and agencies, makes policy innovations. Recently, the CSTP has embarked on the internationalization of Japanese universities and research institutes, the science and technology to prevent natural disasters and combat terrorism and global crime, Innovation 25, the Science and Technology Diplomacy, etc.

Notable are several programs by the CSTP for the Toyako G8 Summit meeting in July 2008, which included the Environmental and Energy Technological Innovations Plan and the Environmental City Programs for reducing CO₂ levels at the city level. Today, while industrial and transportation sectors are peaking off CO₂ emission levels, the greenhouse gases from private houses and office buildings are rapidly increasing in Japan. This is also true for other industrialized countries. Therefore, the CSTP advocates international cooperation among industrialized countries for reduction of CO₂ on the city scale, by introducing new transportation modes such as the light rail transit system (LRT), and taxes as well as financial subsidies for installing solar panels and wind turbines.