

Welcome Remarks by Prof Kazuhiko Takeuchi

JSPS-ICSSR Seminar

Understanding and Addressing Systemic Risks Behind the Socio-economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Japan and India: Developing a Roadmap for a Resilient and Sustainable Future

Date: 21-22 November 2022

Friends and colleagues,

- My name is Kazuhiko Takeuchi, I am the President of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES).
- IGES is a think tank established in March 1998 under an initiative of the Japanese government and with the support of Kanagawa Prefecture. The institute aims to achieve a new paradigm for civilization and conduct innovative policy development and strategic research for environmental measures.
- Given the multi-dimensional nature of environmental issues we face, our institute conducts research and policy advocacy in a broad range of fields including climate change mitigation and adaptation, resource circulation, environmental governance, green economy, biodiversity conservation, sustainable transition and so forth.
- It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to Japan and make a few remarks for this important seminar.
- The seminar is co-organized by IGES and the Indian Institute of Technology Tirupati in India with funding from the Japan Society for Promotion of Science (JSPS) and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). As you can see from the program, several other institutions from Japan and India are also collaborating in this seminar.
- The seminar aims to create strong research bonds between the countries of Japan and India by working on subjects of mutual interest.
- The subject of COVID-19 and risk reduction is an apt area for this seminar because of the times we are living in now.
- You all know the COVID-19 pandemic has hit us all seriously.
- Since its inception in Dec 2019, the pandemic has spread to 207 countries and territories infecting 633 million people and killing 6.6 million as on November 09, 2022.
- 22.7 million people were infected in Japan and 47 thousand were killed.
- In India, 44.7 million people were infected and 531 thousand were killed.

- The differential impacts among countries have largely been due to socioeconomic differences between countries.

Friends and colleagues,

- Our initial experience shows us that COVID-19 has emerged as a major health risk and eventually it has evolved as a systemic affecting all facets of our lives!
- The economies of all countries are affected, and there are prospects for an extended global economic recession.
- Japan's GDP was estimated to contract by approximately 5.0 % for FY 2020 and 3.0% for FY2021.
- India's GDP growth rate was projected as -4.5% in 2020 over 2019.
- India's GDP during the first quarter of 2020 contracted by 24%.
- We are also observing that COVID-19 is interacting with various natural and climatic hazards.
- The record-breaking heatwaves, typhoons and droughts during COVID-19 have undermined the ability of governments to address both the pandemic and climatic hazards.
- This showed the lack of capacity and understanding on how to manage such multi-hazard scenarios among government agencies and civil society alike.
- Governments are now developing solutions to tackle impacts and developing green recovery plans as a consequence.

Friends and colleagues,

- COVID-19 has become unprecedented because of our poor understanding of the drivers behind systemic risks.
- Without a deeper understanding of systemic risks, it will be difficult for governments to identify effective and sustainable policy solutions.
- The nexus between climatic hazards and pandemics have exposed our institutional systems and resulted in unbearable impacts on vulnerable communities.
- These observations are not just limited to a single country. All countries irrespective of their developmental status are affected by this nexus.
- This is the time we learn the lessons from these experiences and design our institutions to tackle these challenges for the future.

- Countries are still dependent on archaic policies and practices developed in an outdated context due to limited awareness of systemic and transboundary risks such as COVID-19.
- Even though risk reduction institutional systems are being continuously improved, the COVID-19 experience showed that the current systems are not designed appropriately to address systemic and transboundary risks.
- We need to strengthen our risk reduction systems to safeguard economies and social welfare and mitigate systemic risks.

Friends and colleagues,

- Our risk reduction systems need to be well coordinated so that the natural hazards including climatic events and pandemics are managed and mitigated in an integrated manner.
- I am very much glad to see that this seminar brings together distinguished researchers from Japan and India to discuss some of the important issues pertinent to COVID-19 and related systemic risks.
- I am sure that your participation in this seminar will help capture the rapidly changing risk landscape of not only Japan and India but of the entire world and enhance a better understanding of risk from an integrated perspective.
- I am very confident that this seminar provides an opportunity for the researchers on both sides of the collaborating countries to ask pertinent questions and seek long-term integrated solutions.
- I am very much hoping that these discussions will evolve into strong collaborative research between both research teams addressing some of the important issues surrounding systemic risks.
- As I conclude my remarks, I once again would like to welcome you all to this important seminar and wish you a good and fruitful discussion.

Thank you!

Note: References for the data cited in this speech are available upon request.