

Consumers Union of Japan

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Peace of Mind

Consumers Union of Japan took the initiative to protest against the proposal to increase Japan's military spending. 28 consumer organisations joined together, wanting to protect ourselves and others from the potential risk that Japan will once again be involved in aggressive warfare.

This year, we will also step up our activities at home and abroad against the risks associated with genetic

engineering, especially genome editing and gene drives. We are reaching out to like-minded groups in other countries to give a voice to consumers and citizens, who all want to live peacefully.

Please stay updated with CUJ's activities and news on our English website, as well as on our English Twitter account:

<https://twitter.com/consumerunionjp/>

Press Event: Consumers in Japan Oppose Increased Military Spending

Joint statement: We, consumers, seek a peaceful society that respects life and livelihood. We oppose the possession of an enemy base attack capability (counterattack capability) and increased military expenditure.

On 6 February 2023, consumer organisations from across Japan jointly issued a joint statement opposing the Kishida Government's proposal for a pre-emptive strike in the name of an enemy base attack and an increase in defence expenditure. The call was made by the Consumers Union of Japan and Shufuren. In response to the call, consumer organisations, co-operatives and other groups from across the country endorsed the statement, which was announced at a press conference held in Tokyo.

The fact that national and local consumer consumers across the country have expressed their opposition to the government's proposed major military build-up shows that a sense of crisis about these government moves is gradually spreading.

On 16 December 2022, the Kishida Government made a Cabinet decision to revise the 'Three Security Documents', including the National

Security Strategy. The 'Three Security Documents' clearly state the policy of possessing an 'enemy base attack capability (counterattack capability)' and increasing Japan's defence expenditure to 43 trillion yen. An enemy base attack capability is the capability to strike within the territory of another country. It carries the risk of a first strike, which is forbidden by international law, and is contrary to Japan's Constitution, which states that there will be no war. Deterrence to avoid war is not a matter of enemy base attack capability (counterattack capability), but of diplomacy through dialogue.

We, 28 consumer organisations, work to solve various consumer problems that arise in our daily lives. It goes without saying once again that our activities are only possible because we are guaranteed a peaceful society. We continue to confirm the importance of pacifism in accordance with the Constitution at the National Consumer Congress, which we have held every year since 1957.

Consumer cooperatives, which together with consumer organisations are responsible for Japan's active consumer movement, have adopted the slogan 'For peace and a better life'. Underlying this is a strong will that war must never happen again, and must not be allowed to happen.

We reaffirm that the basis of the consumer movement is to reject everything that hinders peaceful living

and threatens life, and we oppose the possession of an enemy base attack capability (counterattack capability). We oppose the increased defence expenditure in Japan, seeking a peaceful society that respects life and livelihood.

6 February 2023

(Signed by 28 consumer organisations, including Shufuren, Consumers Union of Japan, Tokyo Shodanren, Kanagawa Shodanren)

Blog: Breaking Bread

By Martin J. Frid, Co-chair of CUJ

The expression “Breaking bread” describes an ancient way of sharing food in a friendly way. It means to share a meal with others, and make sure everyone is fed. It is a term used in the Bible, and must have been common in the Middle East and Europe, when bread was made from rye, and harder than today.

I thought about this expression as I was following the final moments of the UN Convention of Biological Diversity, as they decided on how to share the benefits of biodiversity. Congo was unhappy with the final deal, the Framework, as it feels it will not get enough from the developed countries. Adoption of the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity framework is a step forward, but it really does not seem that there is

strong will to change things. We wanted it to be tough on New GMOs and stop the spread of gene-drives and genome editing.

“We have in our hands a package which I think can guide us all to work together to halt and reverse biodiversity loss,” said Huang Runqiu, the Chinese president of COP15.

We should “break bread” with everyone, and share the benefits of biodiversity, without doing more harm to nature.

How about it, World, Do We Care about Biological Diversity, or Not?

Consumers Union of Japan and other groups that we work with, including the No! GMO Campaign, have a focus on the global negotiations to protect biological diversity.

We participated in the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) conferences in Japan (2010), India (2012) and in South Korea (2014). We followed the 2022 conference in Montreal, Canada.

We are disappointed about the lack of urgency on new genetic technologies, such as gene-drives and genome-editing, and no progress on pesticides, which we know cause real harm. And why does the United Nation still not recognise the role consumers can play when given the information, and labelling? The

concerns raised by civil society organisations working on the issues of synthetic biology and biotechnology remain unresolved.

We wanted a biotechnology related target to establish a process for horizon scanning (finding out what is going on), technology assessment (finding out what is really going on) and monitoring (finding out what is being done). It should also consider socioeconomic impacts of synthetic biology. We think this reinforces the need for a global moratorium on the environmental release of gene drives.

This was our hope for Target 17 but we got nothing like it. We are especially disappointed that all mention of “precaution” has been erased from Target 17.

Consumers Union of Japan has Signed the Global Appeal to Stop Gene Drives

Gene drive technology uses new genetic engineering techniques including CRISPR/Cas9 to forcibly spread genetically engineered traits, including lethal ones, throughout entire populations and species of organisms. Once released into the environment, gene drive organisms cannot be recalled nor controlled thus preempting and overriding the ability of nations, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and future generations to take their own decisions.

Gene drives work against natural rules of inheritance forcing nearly 100% instead of the usual 50% of offspring to inherit their genetically engineered traits. Whereas existing biosafety systems are designed to limit the spread and persistence of living modified organisms to mitigate against adverse impacts, gene drives are intended to spread genetic modifications to alter species and ecosystems. This would undermine the integrity of the UN Cartagena Protocol and international and national biosafety systems, including the procedures for Advanced Informed Agreement (AIA) of countries and Free, Prior and Informed consent (FPIC) of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

In the News: Doubling the Defense Budget Won't be Easy for Japan

At the end of last year, the Kishida administration approved a record draft budget of 114 trillion yen (\$865 billion) and announced plans to increase its defense budget to about 43 trillion yen (\$312 billion) over the next five years. The government has proposed raising its annual defense budget from the current 1 percent of GDP to 2 percent in order to align with the NATO standard. The question, though, is how will the Kishida government fund this

significant increase in defense spending?

One of the plans is to secure extra revenue by introducing expenditure reforms, selling national assets, and raising corporate, income and tobacco taxes. Under the proposal, the corporate tax rate will not be changed, but a surcharge of 4 to 4.5 percent will be added to the existing tax, which is estimated to bring an additional 700 billion yen in revenue.

Most small- and medium-sized companies are likely to be exempted from the proposed corporate tax hike; the surcharge will be applied to less than 6 percent of companies and other large enterprises.

Please read the entire article over at The Diplomat:

<https://thediplomat.com/2023/01/doubling-the-defense-budget-wont-be-easy-for-japan/>

Consumers Union of Japan

CUJ is a politically and financially independent non-governmental organization (NGO). We are funded by membership fees, sales of publications and donations.

CUJ was founded in April 1969 as Japan's first nationwide grassroots consumer organization.

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