

The need for public discussion on policy making

Dr. Kurokawa has long played roles bridging scientists and the government, including serving as president of the Science Council of Japan, special advisor to the Cabinet, and chairman of the Diet's Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission.

Exchanging the wisdom of science

I feel that the central ministries and agencies are currently operating in a "vertical" administration, and lack effective cooperation on horizontal levels. On the other hand, the scientific community tends to connect across borders, often regardless of country or government. Sharing information and cooperating with our colleagues constantly around the world, is what we always do in daily life. I believe that what the scientists are; the ones who should play the role of transmitting Japan's ideas and policies to the world and introducing the world's wisdom to Japan. We live in an era where countries are working together to face various challenges including COVID-19 and climate change. As scientific wisdom becomes more and more important, it would be more meaningful for both the government and the people if the ideas and proposals that scientists transmit in a timely manner are utilized in policy making.

To create trustworthy policies, open discussion is essential. I accepted the offer of the chairman of the Organ Transplant Committee, an advisory body to the Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare, with the condition that it would be open to the public. For the Fukushima nuclear accident, it was a serious incident that the world should be learning from, so the investigation committee was fully opened to the public, with English interpretation and online access, and people were free to observe the meetings regardless of whether they belonged to the press club or not. There is a tendency for advisory councils to be reluctant to open their meetings to the public for fear of making mistakes or making erratic remarks. However, I think it's important to open the meetings to the public, to allow people raise objections, and to make the content of the discussions public so that people can better understand the process of policy making.

Ditch the island nation mentality

When I examine the current situation in Japan, for any one group that you may belong to or join, whether it is the world of politics, business, government offices, or the private sector, you almost never move from that group; I feel that this is due to the old "island nation" mentality and contributes to the status quo of society woes.

In the past, voters tended to think that politicians were people who would drop money on the local community, and they tended to choose "teachers" who would work for the local community. It's a wonder how politicians came to be recognized as their "Representative". That's why they have not complained even when their promises are not kept.

If we continue to think in a closed-minded way, we cannot expect new ideas and social development. There is now a need for people in various industries to come and go and exchange their knowledge. If the voters change, then politics and the country itself will change.

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