Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda pledged at an international forum that Japan will make more sweeping energy-saving efforts and bolster the use of renewable energy sources to propel a “green revolution” aimed at becoming a nation without nuclear power.

“(Last year’s accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant) had us reflect on our past policies in many aspects,” Noda told the Asahi World Environmental Forum 2012, sponsored by The Asahi Shimbun, which opened its two-day session in Tokyo on Oct. 15. “Wishes are shared by many in the Japanese public to become a society that does not depend on nuclear energy.”

The prime minister reiterated the government’s new energy policy, adopted last month, to shift to zero reliance on nuclear power by the end of the 2030s. That goal marks a major reversal of the previous plan before the accident at the Fukushima nuclear disaster that envisaged continuing growth in nuclear power generation.

Noda also said that the nation needs to seek the support of local communities hosting nuclear facilities and the global community and push technological innovations to achieve the goal of a nuclear-free society.

The government will introduce incentive programs aimed to spur the use of energy-efficient equipment and expand the power grid system to allow the spread of wind power and other renewable sources of energy, the prime minister said.

The annual forum is held to exchange views on how to build a more sustainable future and invites top panelists and speakers from government, industry, academia and environmental groups from around the world.

In 2009 in his keynote speech at the forum, then Prime Minister-elect Yukio Hatoyama announced for the first time the government's target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent.

Noda said, however, the shift to alternative energy sources may now cause Japan to lag behind other nations in efforts to combat global warming, since that goal was banking on the expansion of nuclear power.

“Despite exhausting efforts, it will be hard for Japan to come up with alternative measures to cut the emission of carbon dioxide, which was supposed to be achieved through the growth of nuclear energy,” he said in his keynote address on Oct. 15.

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