

Foreword

In 2004, Japan celebrates the 50 years of international cooperation. Japan decided to join the Colombo Plan in 1954, and started to provide Official Development Assistance. On the occasion of this bicentenary year, it is profoundly significant to look back on the role played by ODA in Japan's history.

Receiving assistance from the United States, the World Bank and so on, Japan built the foundations for the present prosperity of the second-largest economic power in the world and the top provider of assistance out of the devastation after World War II. Until now, Japan has provided approximately 221 billion dollars (about 31.7 trillion yen) to a total of 185 countries and regions, contributing to the economic and social development of developing countries. This contribution has received high praise from recipient countries. In addition, it has contributed to ensure the Japan's security and prosperity through strengthening its position and influence in the international community.

Today, the international community intensifies its efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, advocated as specific targets regarding development issues that should be achieved by 2015. Within Japan, amid the tough economic and fiscal conditions, the outlook of the public regarding ODA has been severe. However, Japan has drawn high international expectations to make contributions that befit its national power.

Japan is now praised and trusted by countries all over the world. It should be reminded that this is only because a lot of Japanese people dedicated themselves to the improvement of the economy and welfare of developing countries. Based upon the progress of the past 50 years, the government of Japan intends to make further efforts to improve Japan's ODA, by increasing its flexibility, strategic value, transparency and efficiency and encouraging wide public participation therein, in accordance with the revised ODA Charter of last year.

This year's ODA White Paper features the accomplishments and progress of the 50 years of ODA, while discussing specific cases pertaining to the role which Japan has played in the development of developing countries over the past half a century. Furthermore, it reports the ODA disbursements for fiscal year 2003, in accordance with the framework of the ODA Charter. I would be pleased if this White Paper could be of any service in deepening the understanding of Japan's ODA.

October 2004



Machimura Nobutaka
Minister for Foreign Affairs

町村 信孝