



Chapter 4

Japan's Diplomacy Open to the Public

1. Japanese Society and People Deepening Their Ties with the World

Increasing the number of people traveling between Japan and other countries stimulates the economy and promotes mutual understanding among different cultures. Based on this view, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attaches significant importance to promoting exchange of people with other countries by facilitating the entry of foreign nationals to Japan and their stay in the country, as well as by supporting the activities of Japanese citizens in the international community.

The number of foreign nationals visiting Japan reached approximately 10.36 million in 2013 (up from 8.36 million in 2012), for the first time exceeding the government's target of attracting 10 million visitors to Japan. Moreover, although the number of foreign residents in Japan (mid to long-term residents and special permanent residents) has declined since it peaked at the end of 2008 following the global financial crisis, its figure stood at approximately 2.05 million at the end of June 2013, about 1.2 times more compared with the number of approximately 1.69 million in 2000.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been relaxing visa requirements to contribute to the promotion of Japan as a tourism-oriented country, which is one of the key pillars of the Japan Revitalization Strategy. In 2013, capitalizing on the occasion of the 40th year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, it introduced measures on visa exemptions and multiple-entry visas⁹ for visitors from ASEAN member states. These measures are believed to have been a factor behind the record number of foreign visitors to Japan in 2013. Although relaxing visa requirements has such an effect, it is nonetheless important to ensure strict visa screening in order to prevent the entry of foreign nationals who could harm Japan's interests. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs works on this issue comprehensively

in cooperation with relevant ministries and agencies.

With an aging and shrinking population, it is becoming ever more important for Japan not only to attract foreign tourists, but also to secure the human resources needed to support the Japanese economy, irrespective of their origin. Since 2005, against this backdrop, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been arranging international symposiums and workshops on the acceptance of foreign nationals and their integration into Japan, aiming to encourage debate among people by providing occasion to discuss concrete challenges and measures taken arising from the acceptance of foreign nationals and their integration into Japan. In 2013, discussion was held focusing on foreign residents in the context of large-scale disasters. The participants shared the recognition that foreign nationals should be regarded as those contributing to Japanese society in times of a large-scale disaster by sharing their experiences and lessons.

Today, it is more important than ever to develop "All-Japan" diplomacy, utilizing the strengths of non-governmental bodies in Japan. For example, in recent years, against the background of growing public interest in international cooperation, the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have increased their importance as channels for offering policy proposals and conducting support activities in developing countries. In the field of development assistance, NGOs play a significant role in dealing with diplomatic issues relating to such matters as human rights, disarmament, policies on human trafficking, and United Nations (UN) reform. Recognizing this, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regards NGOs as important partners in international cooperation and is striving to strengthen partnerships in promoting such cooperation through financial assistance,

⁹ Visas that can be used an unlimited number of times during their period of validity.

environmental improvements, and policy dialogue.



Mine safety education program implemented by the Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR) (Afghanistan; Source: AAR/JPF)

Participants of the volunteer programs operated by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), including the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) and Senior Volunteers (SV), are crucial actors in the field of international cooperation. They see the development challenges faced by a country from the same perspective as local people and work hard together to tackle them. Such programs are highly appreciated by various countries, as initiatives that typify Japan's approach of visible accountability. In addition, they play a substantial role not only in the economic and social development of the country concerned, but also in fostering mutual understanding, friendship, and goodwill

between Japan and developing countries. Furthermore, these programs are tremendously significant because the knowledge and experience of the volunteers are fed back into Japanese society once they return home. In light of the globalization of corporate activities, the Private Sector Partnership Volunteer system was established (FY2012) to meet the needs of small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) and other private-sector companies aiming to expand their business overseas. Thus, JICA volunteer programs are being utilized to support efforts by companies and other organizations to nurture personnel with a global outlook.



A Senior Volunteer teaches kendo at a university in the Dominican Republic. Since 2011, kendo has been included in the physical education classes conducted as part of this university's academic program, as a means of building character. (Source: Koji Sato / JICA)

Local governments and communities play a substantial role in building good and multi-layered international relations in a wide range of fields. In recent years, local governments and communities have actively pursued wide-ranging international and economic exchange initiatives. The role played by local governments and communities in diplomacy is absolutely crucial from the perspective of fostering mutual international understanding, developing relationships of trust, and strengthening the Japan brand. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs regards local governments and communities as important partners in promoting diplomacy and aims to reinforce the comprehensive diplomatic capacity of the nation as a whole. To this end, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attaches considerable importance to (1) communicating the appeal of Japan's local communities to the world, (2) supporting the international initiatives of local communities, and (3) providing extensive information about international exchange. The Ministry of Foreign

Affairs has been undertaking various measures, using Japan's diplomatic missions overseas, which local governments are encouraged to utilize to promote their international and economic activities abroad; regional promotion seminars, which offer local governments the opportunity to introduce various features of local regions for the diplomatic corps in Japan; diplomats' study tours, as part of which the diplomatic corps visit local regions and learn their charms, such as cultural heritage, advanced industry and technology, and so on; and the local government partnership forums and Kansai local government partnership symposiums, which provide a chance to explain important foreign policy to officials of local governments. In particular, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is conducting a variety of initiatives to support measures to counter the damage arising from harmful rumors in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake, as well as efforts to revitalize local industries and local economies.


Column

Haiku—A Multicolored Bridge Connecting Japan and the European Union

I am sure that many Japanese people have composed haiku poetry during their elementary school Japanese classes, but did you know that the haiku poetry form has spread from Japan to some 70 countries, where people enjoy haiku in their own language? Since 2009, Japan and the European Union (EU) have held a Japan–EU English Haiku Contest annually, and to date more than 2,000 people have participated in this contest.

The three disasters
(仮訳：嵐去り)

Storms turn into a soft wind
後に残るは

A new humane wind
優しき心)

The haiku above was composed by President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy—one of the leaders of the EU. He presented his haiku at the annual Japan–EU Summit Meeting held in May 2011, shortly after the Great East Japan Earthquake. President Van Rompuy is well-known not only as a politician but also as a devotee of haiku. On November 18, 2013, he visited Matsuyama City, Ehime Prefecture, the birthplace of Masaoka Shiki—one of the great haiku masters. During his visit, President Van Rompuy was warmly welcomed by Matsuyama Mayor Katsuhito Noshi and citizens of Matsuyama. President Van Rompuy talked about his passion for haiku, saying, “I wish to contribute to the joy and happiness of people by composing haiku as a ‘haiku ambassador.’”

The next day, at the annual Japan–EU Summit Meeting in Tokyo, President Van Rompuy presented the following piece.

*People far away
But sun and stars on our flags
Belong together*

In response, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe composed an impromptu *haiku*.

*Star-filled sky
Looking up at the stars at night
Dear friends join*

This was the first occasion on which both leaders of Japan and the EU have presented *haiku* together. This exchange of *haiku* on the theme of Japan–EU relations helped to create a genial atmosphere at the meeting, and brought the leaders much closer together.

The power of *haiku* is not limited to the promotion of people-to-people exchanges between Japan and other countries through Japanese culture. Composing *haiku* can also be an opportunity for greater self-reflection. Focusing on this point, the European Commission decided to implement *haiku* poetry courses in prisons in 2013–2014 as part of their correctional education program. The *haiku* course has been or will be provided at 14 prisons in five EU member states—Belgium, Poland, Italy, Greece and Serbia. At the prison in Belgium, where the *haiku* course has already been provided, it was reported that all 10 participants faced themselves more squarely as a result of the course. The full potential of *haiku* is yet to be uncovered.

Sincerely hoping that *haiku*, as a bridge between Japan and the world, will help to bring joy and happiness to someone somewhere in the world, I would like to close with my own *haiku*.

Walk on the rainbow
(この虹を

Hoping to see smiles and dreams
迎れば友の

Of friends across the globe
咲みと夢)



President of the European Council Van Rompuy receives the title of Honorary Citizen of Matsuyama by Mayor Noshi. Matsuyama Castle can be seen in the upper background.

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What is *haiku*?

Haiku kigo, a seasonal word/reference, to describe the season and consists of three phrases. But, there are no strict rules on English *haiku* composition, and a *kigo* is not essential, although a three-line *haiku* is desirable.

2. Supporting Japanese Nationals Overseas

In 2012, approximately 18.49 million Japanese nationals traveled abroad, while there were approximately 1.25 million Japanese nationals overseas as of October 2012. Thus, there have been greater and more diverse risks of Japanese nationals being involved in incidents or accidents, or facing natural disasters or riots abroad. Protecting the lives and safety of Japanese nationals and enhancing their interests is one of the important missions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides Japanese nationals with timely information on incidents and accidents including terrorism or kidnapping, wars, conflicts, natural disasters, and infectious disease, while encouraging them to take necessary safety measures. The Ministry also seeks to strengthen its capability and measures so that it can offer as much assistance as possible to Japanese nationals who have strayed into danger.

Furthermore, with lessons learned from the January 2013 terrorist attack in Algeria, in which Japanese nationals were among the victims, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is undertaking various initiatives aimed at enhancing measures to ensure the safety of Japanese nationals and Japanese companies based overseas.

In May 2013, the Diet approved the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the Hague Convention). In this regard, the Ministry is improving consultation systems at diplomatic missions

overseas and taking other steps to make it easier for Japanese nationals overseas to seek assistance if they are facing problems such as divorce proceedings or domestic violence.

Japanese embassies and consulates-general provide Japanese nationals overseas with essential administrative services such as issuing passports and various types of certificates, as well as accepting notifications concerning nationality and family registers, and handling overseas voting. In addition, Japanese overseas establishments support the daily lives of Japanese nationals living abroad through such activities as providing assistance to local Japanese schools and supplementary schools. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also assists Japanese immigrants and Japanese descent, who have contributed to the development of closer bilateral relations of Japan and their respective countries as “bridges” between them. Furthermore, the Ministry endeavors to make additional improvements to consular services, which play an important role in protecting the safety of Japanese nationals and enhancing their interests. To this end, our initiatives include nurturing experts in consular affairs, improving trainings focused on building up know-how in the field of consular administration, introducing advanced IT solutions, strengthening networks for public-private cooperation, and outsourcing some operations.

3. Diplomacy with the Support of the Public

The understanding and support of Japanese citizens are indispensable to smooth implementation of Japan’s foreign policy. As such, the prompt provision of clear explanations on the policy details and on the role of government is crucial. Furthermore, the influence of social media on society is growing, so the government must be proactive in ensuring communication with the public in a comprehensive way. Accordingly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is striving to enhance its ability to communicate information, using all forms of media in an agile and effective manner, combining PR, media briefings, and cultural and people-to-people exchange.

Regular press conferences are conducted four days a week by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, one of the Parliamentary Senior Vice-Ministers for Foreign Affairs, or the Press Secretary, while extraordinary press conferences are held as necessary. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs releases statements by the Minister

for Foreign Affairs or Press Secretary announcing the stance of the Japanese government on specific issues, and issues press releases that provide information on the Ministry’s activities. In addition, the Minister, Parliamentary Senior Vice-Ministers, and Parliamentary Vice-Ministers explain the government’s foreign policies directly to Japanese citizens through appearances on TV and by means of other media.

The Ministry utilizes its official website to swiftly distribute information about diplomatic activities by the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, as well as to promptly provide the latest information about Japan’s foreign policy and the situation in countries across the globe. The Ministry also is utilizing Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social media as a means of communication.

Furthermore, the Ministry organizes speeches by the Minister for Foreign Affairs to promote public relations through dialogue with Japanese nationals

and holds lectures by its officials and foreign policy debates at universities and high schools nationwide in a bid to cultivate the next generation of Japanese leaders. The Ministry is also striving to improve two-way communication with the public through such public consultation initiatives as receiving comments and opinions on its official website.

To promote further understanding of, and trust in, diplomacy among Japanese citizens, the Ministry has established the Committee for the Promotion of Declassification of the Diplomatic Historical Records, and has been transferring records to the Diplomatic Archives so that they may be declassified. It has been striving to implement the procedure smoothly and swiftly, and the process has been accelerating.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is continuing its efforts to strengthen foreign policy implementation structures through utilizing its limited resources for high priority issues, in order to promote flexible diplomacy that can deal with changes in both domestic and international situations.

The Space Policy Division was established in May 2013 based on the ministerial organizational order to comprehensively coordinate space-related issues in both

civil and national security aspects. The Ministry also established the Embassy of Japan in South Sudan in July 2013 and the Embassy of Japan in Iceland in January 2014. However, the number of Japanese diplomatic missions overseas remains fewer than those of other major countries. The Ministry is therefore committed to strategically improving this situation. Also, the number of staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan is less than those of other major countries. In order to better deal with the increasingly complex diplomatic challenges, the Ministry continues to make every effort to increase the number of staff. In the 2013 budget, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs allocated ¥608.3 billion to support the foreign policy implementation structures described above, with priority given to (1) the dynamic development of strategic diplomacy based on universal values, and (2) diplomacy that contributes to growth and to the strengthening of economic foundation. From 2014 onward, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will make efforts to achieving further streamlining and will strive to ensure a level of foreign policy implementation structures that is comparable to those of other major countries.