

Section 2

Supporting Japanese Nationals Overseas

Overview

(Risks and Safety of Japanese Nationals abroad)

In July 2016, the terrorist attack in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, occurred, claiming seven Japanese lives. The risk of such terrorism is now spreading from the Middle East and Africa to Europe, the U.S. and Asia, where there are many Japanese nationals and Japanese companies. Besides terrorist attacks, the risk of ordinary crimes and infectious diseases that are unfamiliar in Japan exists worldwide. A total of 17.89 million¹ Japanese nationals traveled abroad in 2017 and approximately 1.34 million Japanese nationals live abroad as of October 2016. Securing the safety of Japanese nationals overseas and promoting their interests is one of the most important missions of MOFA.

In August 2016, in light of the terrorist attack in Dhaka, MOFA reviewed the recommendations from the “Task Force on Bolstering Safety Measures for Japanese Nationals Overseas,” issued in 2015, and published a report indicating measures

that should be further strengthened. The report pointed out that the public and private sectors need to work mainly in the important areas of (1) enhancing the awareness of safety measures and response capabilities of every single person; (2) delivering timely, appropriate and effective information on safety to the people; and (3) establishing a system to steadily implement these actions, in order to prevent Japanese nationals from being harmed by terrorism. Based on it, MOFA is working to further strengthen security measures through the distribution of “Golgo 13’s Security Guidelines for Japanese SMEs abroad” and other means. In addition, ever since the establishment of “International Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Collection Unit” in December 2015, many efforts have been made to gather and concentrate information, including strengthening relationships with security and intelligence agencies of various foreign countries, while reinforcing the unit’s structure. The Unit collects information about international terrorism that meets the interests of the Prime Minister’s Office. The collected

¹ Source: Ministry of Justice “Statistics on Legal Migrants”

information, including terrorism threats, is promptly reported to the Prime Minister's Office and policy making departments and utilized for disseminating warnings, assessing the security situation and making policy decisions for the safety of Japanese nationals overseas.

In addition to terrorism, there are risks of being involved in robbery and other crimes and troubles, political disturbance, natural disasters and infectious diseases such as the Zika virus disease, which has been spreading across Latin America, a part of the U.S., and Southeast Asia. When traveling or staying overseas, it is very important for every individual to have high awareness of safety and health, collect information and take the necessary safety measures. MOFA issues safety information through its Overseas Travel Registration ("Tabi-Regi") and the Overseas Safety Website, calling on people to utilize them.

MOFA also endeavors to protect the safety of Japanese nationals overseas and promote their interests. Efforts to this end include issuing passports and various types of certificates, accepting notifications concerning family register, and nationality, and handling overseas voting.

MOFA, as the "Central Authority" for the implementation of the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the Hague Convention), provides assistance to realize the prompt return of children who have been wrongfully removed across borders, and/or to realize visitation or contact with children across borders.

1 Overseas Risks and Safety of Japanese Nationals

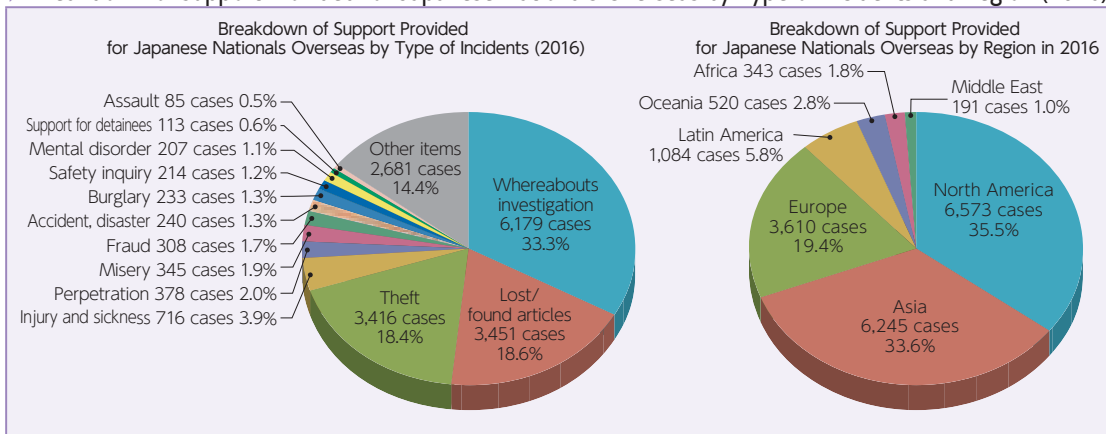
(1) Incidents and Accidents in 2017 and Countermeasures

There were no Japanese victims in terrorist attacks in 2017, despite the world seeing a large number of terrorist attacks. The recent tendency of terrorist attacks includes terrorism happening not only in the Middle East and Africa but also in Europe, the U.S. and Asia where many Japanese travel and reside. Both homegrown terrorism perpetrated by people born in Western countries and indoctrinated through websites or other means by foreign Islamic extremists and lone-wolf terrorism perpetrated by people acting solely with little organizational background are found in tremendous numbers. Additionally, terrorist attacks aimed at "soft targets" where large numbers of the general public gather everyday are on the rise. This tendency has not changed despite the fact that ISIL is losing its territory in Syria and Iraq. Also, foreign fighters of ISIL now are returning to their home countries or moving to third countries. These factors make it more difficult to prevent terror attacks.

The following incidents in 2017 demonstrate this tendency: the bombing at a subway in St. Petersburg, Russia, in May; the suicide bombing at a concert hall in Manchester, UK, in May; the suicide bombing at a bus terminal in Jakarta, Indonesia, in May; the vehicle and knife attack around the London Bridge, UK, in June; the vehicle attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils, Spain, in August; and the vehicle attack at Manhattan in New York, U.S., in October, etc.

As for crimes overseas, murder incidents involving Japanese nationals occurred in

► Breakdown of Support Provided for Japanese Nationals Overseas by Type of Incidents and Region (2016)



several countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia, the U.S. and Brazil. One such example victimizing Japanese students overseas is the murder of a male Japanese student by a rampaging driver in Australia in January.

Incidents involving Japanese nationals include: a drowning in a waterfall at a famous tourist spot in Punta Arenas, Costa Rica, in February; a drowning while surfing off the coast of Bali, Indonesia, in June; a fall accident while hiking in Sequoia National Park in California, U.S., in July; falling accidents on Mt. Monch and Mt. Zermatt, Switzerland, in July and August; a death by a hotel fire in Yangon, Myanmar, in October; and a traffic accident in Ayutthaya, Thailand, in November.

Japanese nationals were also affected by various major natural disasters, including the earthquake in southern Mexico in September, the large hurricane that struck the southern U.S. and countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and the volcanic activities of Mt. Agung on Bali, Indonesia. There were a number of incidents of political instability that could have affected Japanese nationals, such as the general and presidential elections in

Kenya, the separatist movements triggered by the referendum in the Catalonia Region of Spain and the missile attacks by anti-government forces in Yemen targeting Saudi Arabia.

As was the case previous year, there were continued reports of people dying from sudden illnesses during their trip.

In some of such cases, family members of the victims faced difficulties dealing with higher medical and transportation costs and insufficient medical services compared to those in Japan.

As for infectious diseases, cases of Ebola were reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and there continue to be reports of cases of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in the Middle East and human infection with avian influenza A (H7N9) virus in China. Mosquito-borne diseases, such as Zika virus, Dengue fever and malaria, also continued to spread throughout the world.

MOFA issues “Overseas Travel Safety Information” on infectious disease and air pollution in countries and regions where health and medical caution is required, to provide Japanese nationals staying abroad with information on the current outbreak

situation and prevention measures as well as with relevant warnings.

(Tips for Traveling and Living Abroad)

As described in the above incidents, threatening of the safety of Japanese nationals constantly occurred all around the world. In addition to registration to “Overseas Travel Registration (“Tabi-Regi”)” or submission of Overseas Residential Registration, it is important to take the following actions when traveling and living abroad: (1) checking security and other information through the Overseas Safety Website, media and other sources, (2) taking adequate safety measures to avoid risks, and (3) contacting the nearest Japanese diplomatic missions overseas and family in Japan in case of emergency. It is very important for each individual to take out travel insurance with a sufficient coverage since the lack of travel insurance may make it difficult to pay the medical expenses or to receive proper medical care in case of diseases and accident injuries due to expensive medical fees abroad.

(2) Safety Measures for Japanese Nationals Overseas

While Japanese nationals play an active part in the international community, there are many cases of Japanese nationals suffering damages overseas. The number of cases where Japanese nationals received support or protection from the diplomatic missions overseas and the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association has stayed on a high level. There were 20,437 by person and 18,566 by case in 2016².

In order to avoid accidents and troubles overseas, it is important to collect information before traveling abroad. MOFA works to enhance the safety awareness of Japanese nationals and promote its measures by disseminating and sharing information on safety measures.

MOFA issues the latest safety information worldwide on the Overseas Safety Website and emails newly uploaded local information to Japanese nationals staying overseas with Overseas Residential Registrations and short-term travelers with registration in the Overseas Travel Registration (“Tabi-Regi”) Diplomatic mission overseas release safety information as well. “Tabi-Regi” is also available to those without travel plans through simple registration. The distributed safety information is widely utilized by Japanese business persons in charge of foreign operations in such a way as to plan safety measures. Since “Tabi-Regi” was launched in July 2014, MOFA has improved its user-friendliness and sponsored many activities to increase registrants. Currently, a cumulative total registration is more than 3 million and the number of registrants per year is close to reach 2 million people.

MOFA strives to enhance the knowledge and capability of the Japanese people concerning safety measures and crisis management through seminars and trainings. MOFA has hosted safety measure seminars in and out of Japan and sent lecturers from the Consular Affairs Bureau to seminars nationwide organized by other organizations and associations (over 100 times in FY 2017). MOFA also hosted “Public-Private Joint Practical Training for

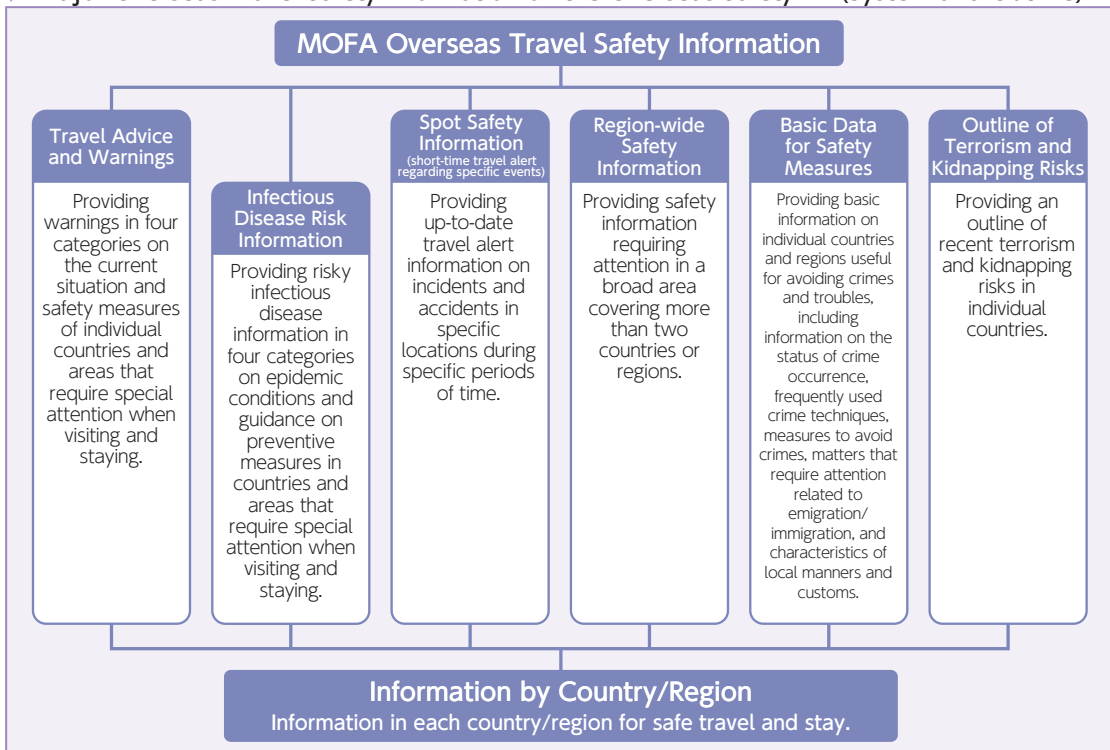
² The Statistics on Assistance for Japanese Involved in Accidents and Other Incidents, first published in 1986, is an annual report on the number of cases/people where the diplomatic missions overseas and the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association provided assistance to Japanese nationals involved in any kind of troubles overseas, such as incidents/accidents, acts of committing crimes and falling victim to crime or disaster.

▶ **Top 20 Diplomatic Missions Overseas in Terms of the Number of Cases of Assistance Provided for Japanese Nationals Overseas**

Ranking	Diplomatic missions overseas	Cases	Ranking	Diplomatic missions overseas	Cases
1	Embassy of Japan in Thailand	1,048	11	Consulate-General of Japan in Barcelona, Spain	348
2	Embassy of Japan in the Philippines	890	12	Consulate-General of Japan in Hong Kong, China	339
3	Consulate-General of Japan in Los Angeles, U.S.	851	13	Consulate-General of Japan in San Francisco, U.S.	322
4	Consulate-General of Japan in Shanghai, China	729	13	Consulate-General of Japan in Hagatna, U.S.	322
5	Consulate-General of Japan in New York, U.S.	653	15	Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association, Taipei Office, Taiwan	309
6	Embassy of Japan in the United Kingdom	617	16	Consulate-General of Japan in Seattle, U.S.	293
7	Consulate-General of Japan in Honolulu, U.S.	551	17	Consulate-General of Japan in Houston, U.S.	291
8	Embassy of Japan in the People's Republic of China	480	18	Consulate-General of Japan in Boston, U.S.	284
9	Embassy of Japan in the Republic of Korea	405	19	Embassy of Japan in Italy	281
10	Embassy of Japan in France	371	20	Embassy of Japan in the United States of America	277

(Based on the Statistics on Assistance for Japanese Involved in Accidents and Other Incidents 2017, these 20 Diplomatic Missions are listed in descending order of the number of cases where the embassies, consulates general, consular offices, etc. provided assistance for Japanese)

▶ **Major Overseas Travel Safety Information on the Overseas Safety HP (System and Outline)**



Counter-Terrorism and Anti-Kidnapping Measures” with the participation from private companies. These efforts are beneficial not only for taking preventive measures against dangers like terrorism, but also for enhancing response capabilities in case of emergency.

The public and private cooperation in

overseas safety measure is proceeding. The diplomatic missions overseas host regular meetings of “Security Consultation and Liaison Committees” with local Japanese nationals to share information, exchange opinions and bolster collaboration in preparation for emergencies.

After the terrorist attack in Dhaka in



MOFA Overseas Safety Website (<https://www.anzen.mofa.go.jp/>)



MOFA Overseas Safety App
Overseas safety website "About the Overseas Safety App Services"
Can be downloaded from (http://www.anzen.mofa.go.jp/c_info/oshirase_kaian_app.html)



MOFA "Overseas Travel Registration ("Tabi-Regi")"
<https://www.ezairyu.mofa.go.jp/tabireg/index.html>

July 2016, MOFA has worked to enhance the awareness of safety measures and the response capabilities of people, particularly the international cooperation personnel, small and medium enterprises, students studying abroad, short-term travelers and others who have limited access to information on safety.

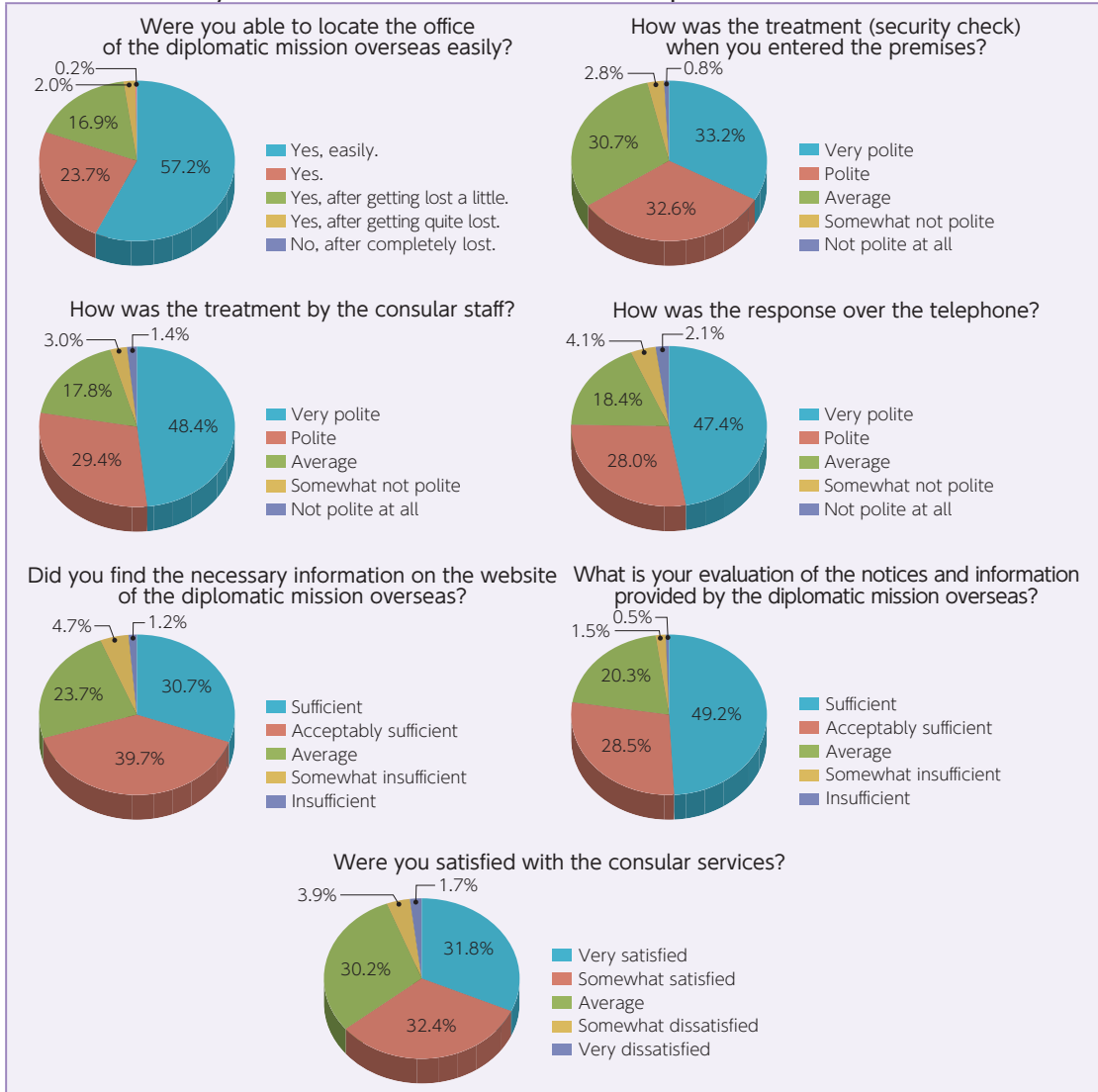
MOFA launched the "Small and Medium Enterprise Overseas Safety Measures Network," with the participation of 29 organizations and agencies related to overseas expansion of Japanese businesses in September 2016, in order to support SMEs, which account for the vast majority of Japanese companies. The collaboration among members in this network has strengthened safety measures of those companies, such as raising safety awareness



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Golgo 13's Security Guidelines for Japanese SMEs Abroad
http://www.anzen.mofa.go.jp/anzen_info/golgo13xgaimusho.html

through seminars and newsletters, establishing horizontal relationships among participating companies and seeking to provide better support services for business, etc. Furthermore, in March 2017, MOFA released "Golgo 13's Security

▶ Results of Survey on the Consular Service (2017: 147 diplomatic missions overseas)



Guidelines for Japanese SMEs abroad,” which explains the basic safety measures for the companies in an easy-to-understand manner using famous manga (cartoons). After its release, about 90,000 copies of the fine printed version have been distributed and the special webpage has gotten about 1.7 million views, which shows that the guidelines have been used by Japanese businesses widely and contributed to raising awareness on overseas safety measures.

MOFA is working to enhance the

awareness of safety measures for Japanese students studying overseas and aid in the establishment of crisis management systems at schools. MOFA sends lecturers to universities and other educational institutions, many of which have insufficient knowhow or experience on safety measures and emergency responses. MOFA is going forward with efforts to connect government agencies with educational institutions, overseas study agencies and students by such means as beginning

► Changes in the Number of Issued Passports of Japan



automatic registration to “Overseas Travel Registration (“Tabi-Regi”)” with some overseas study institutions.

As for safety measures for short-term travelers, MOFA is engaged in PR activities to encourage them to register in “Overseas Travel Registration (“Tabi-Regi”).” MOFA aims to reach 2.4 million as the number of cumulative registrants by the summer of 2018. The number of registrants increased from about 610,000 to about 1.49 million through January to December in 2016.

In addition, MOFA hosted an overseas safety measure seminar for tour guides in June and crisis managers of travel companies in July in an effort to convey the importance of travel companies and tour guides working on safety measures and to call for cooperation in developing safety measures for travelers.

2 Consular Service and Assistance for Japanese Living Overseas

(1) Improving Consular Service

With the aim of providing high quality consular services to Japanese nationals

overseas, MOFA conducts a questionnaire survey every year on services such as consular staffs attitudes in over-the-counter consular services and telephone responses at diplomatic missions overseas, information provision, and Visiting Consular Service (targetting only the missions undertaking its service) to reflect the views of Japanese nationals overseas in order to improve consular services. In 2017, the surveys were conducted by 147 diplomatic missions overseas and received 20,801 responses. The results showed a generally high level of satisfaction with regard to the overall consular services provided by the diplomatic missions overseas, including over-the-counter services and telephone responses. At the same time, there were negative responses and requests for improvement, though few in number. As such, MOFA intends to continue its efforts for improvements listening to the views of the users so as to provide consular services at the diplomatic missions overseas in line with user’s perspective.

(2) Issuance of Passports and Prevention of Illicit Acquisition of Passports

Approximately 4.08 million passports were issued in 2017. As of the end of December 2017, approximately 29.77 million ordinary passports are valid, and all of them are ePassports³.

The issuance of ePassports is effective for deterring illicit use of passports such as forged or altered passports. However, there continue to be cases of illicit acquisition of passports by means of impersonation⁴. There were cases where Japanese nationals or illegal foreign residents left and entered Japan using passports acquired illegally under the name of another person. Also, passports with false identities were used for borrowing money from financial institutions, opening bank accounts for the purpose of selling them to those who plot to commit other crimes, and subscribing to mobile phone services without the real passport holders knowing it. In order to prevent illicit acquisition of passports that may nurture these secondary or tertiary crimes, MOFA has been making further effort to enhance strict identity examination in issuing a passport, for example, by such means as designating a stringent examination period against illicit acquisition of passports through identity theft at passport offices located in each prefecture.

While the integrated circuit (IC) chips in Japanese passports contain facial images and other information identifying the passport holders, ePassports with improved security against counterfeiting using biometric information such as fingerprints

have become widespread in other countries, and possibilities for more effective use of IC chips are under consideration at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Consignment of passport-related work such as application and delivery, from the prefectural governments to city/town offices has been permitted since 2006. 834 cities/towns had started passport service by the end of 2017, which make up almost 50% of all the cities/towns in Japan.

(3) Overseas Voting

The overseas voting system allows Japanese voters living overseas to vote in national elections. In the elections after June 2007, it was made possible to vote from overseas for the small electoral district election of the House of Representatives and the electoral district election of the House of Councillors (including by-election and recall election), in addition to voting for the proportional representation segment of elections of the both Houses. In order to vote from overseas, it is necessary to be registered in advance on the overseas voter directory managed by the election board of the city/town government and to obtain overseas voter identification. Voters with valid overseas voter identification can vote by choosing one of the three methods of voting, a) Voting at diplomatic missions overseas, b) Voting by mail, or c) voting in Japan.

The diplomatic missions overseas have been making efforts to disseminate the

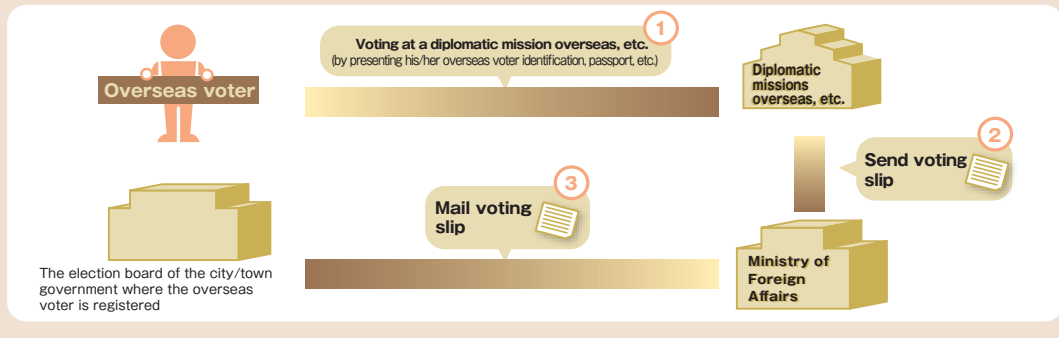
³ An ePassport is a passport embedded with an integrated circuit (IC) chip which contains a digitized facial image (biometric information) and other information of the passport holder to prevent passport forgery and its illicit use by a third party. It was first issued in 2006.

⁴ The number of illegal acquisitions of passports through identity theft discovered: 52 in 2013, 41 in 2014, 31 in 2015, 22 in 2016, and 21 in 2017.

▶ Overseas Voting

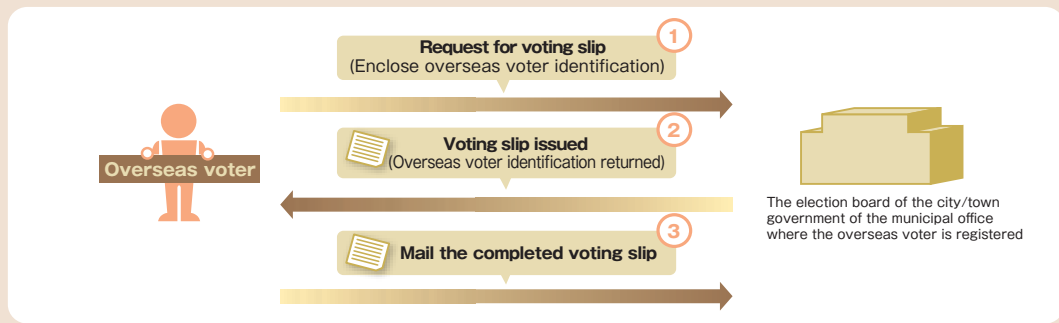
a) Voting at diplomatic missions overseas

Voters registered on an overseas voter directory can vote by presenting their overseas voter identification and ID such as a passport at a diplomatic mission (period and time for voting vary depending on the mission)



b) Voting by mail

A voting slip can be requested by sending his/her overseas voter identification and written request for a voting slip to the chair of the election board of the city/town government where the voter is registered. Completed voting slip needs to arrive at the voting venue before the end of voting time (20:00 Japan time) of the domestic voting day in Japan.



c) Voting in Japan

If overseas voters are temporarily staying in Japan during the election time, or in case voters are not yet registered on a domestic voter directory after their permanent return in Japan, the voter may vote in the same way as other domestic voters with their overseas voter identification for overseas voting (early voting, absentee voting, and voting on the election day).

system and to increase the number of registered voters by publicizing this system and carrying out a visiting service for the registration of Japanese nationals living in remote areas. In December 2016, revisions (that will take effect by June 2018) were made to the Public Officer Election Act in order to simplify the voter registration process for the absentee voter register. Once the act is revised, in addition to the conventional method of applying through

diplomatic missions overseas after moving overseas, Japanese nationals will be able to apply at their municipal office at the time they report their move abroad.

(4) Assistance for Japanese Nationals Living and Engaging in Activities Overseas

A Japanese Schools and Supplementary Education Schools

Education for children is one of the major

concerns for Japanese nationals living abroad. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, MOFA carries out assistance for the Japanese Schools (partial assistance for school building rental fees, rewards for locally hired teachers and safety measures expenses) so that the overseas school children at the age of domestic compulsory education can receive education equivalent to that of Japan. MOFA also provides the same assistance as that for the Japanese Schools to the Supplementary Education Schools (educational institutions established to maintain children's ability, such as Japanese language ability) mainly in areas where the Japanese Schools are not located. In addition, MOFA is further strengthening and expanding assistance related to safety measures in light of the recent changes in the international terrorism situation.

B Medical/Health Measures

In order to provide health advice through consultations to Japanese nationals residing in countries where the medical situation is poor, MOFA dispatches medical teams with the support of domestic medical institutions (one country, seven cities in FY2017). MOFA also dispatches medical specialists to regions where infectious diseases or air pollution become serious, and organizes health and safety lectures (nine countries, 17 cities in FY2017).

In addition, MOFA collects information on infectious diseases outbreak overseas and provides them publicly through the Overseas Safety Website and the websites and emails of diplomatic missions overseas.

C Other Needs

In order to eliminate the complexity of various procedures for Japanese nationals living overseas (such as converting Japanese driving licenses to the country of residence, obtaining stay/work permits) and to make living abroad more comfortable, MOFA continues talks with foreign governments.

When converting driving licenses issued in foreign countries to Japanese driving licenses, all persons with driving licenses issued in a foreign country are exempted from taking certain examinations, when it is confirmed that they have no problems with operating vehicles. On the other hand, it is mandatory to take driving tests when converting Japanese licenses to local licenses in some countries and states, such as North and South America. MOFA is calling for those countries to simplify the procedures for license conversion as in Japan.

MOFA also supports victims of atomic bomb attacks living overseas in applying for the authorization of Atomic Bomb Diseases and for the issuance of Health Check Certificates, via diplomatic and consular missions.

3 Cooperation with Emigrants and Japanese Descendants, Nikkei

The migration of Japanese nationals overseas has a history of 149 years as of 2017. There are estimated 3.6 million overseas Japanese and Nikkei, with especially large numbers residing in North, Central and South America. They make positive and great contributions to the development of the countries in various fields, including politics, economy, academics and culture, and at the same time, they act as a bridge between Japan

and these countries in developing close relations.

Together with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), MOFA provides cooperation in Central and South America, where an estimated 2.13 million Japanese descendants live. Various forms of assistance are offered, including welfare support for aging emigrants, training in Japan for Japanese immigrants and descendants, and dispatch of volunteers to the local Nikkei communities. In May, the report from the “Panel of Experts on Collaborating with Communities of Japanese Immigrants and Descendants (“Nikkei”) in Latin America and the Caribbean” was submitted to Foreign Minister Kishida. The report advocated the importance of building further relationships with Nikkei communities.

To date, invitation programs for Nikkei leaders in various fields have been carried out in North, Central and South America. Also, efforts are underway to strengthen relations with Japanese descendants in these regions. As part of this, diplomatic missions in each country are working closely to cooperate with Nikkei communities, including actively establishing an occasion to meet with Nikkei persons during visits of Japanese government high-level officials.

The 58th Convention of the Nikkei and Japanese Abroad was successfully held by the Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad in Tokyo in October, in which around 250 emigrants and their descendants from 19 countries participated. As for MOFA, Foreign Minister Kono held a welcome reception to deepen exchange with emigrants and their descendants. Japan intends to provide support for Japanese emigrants and their descendants, promote

cooperation with the young generation and strengthen the bond between these people and Japan.

4 The Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the Hague Convention) and its Implementation

The Hague Convention is designed as an international mechanism for addressing disputes arising from the wrongful removal or retention of children across borders in the belief that the interests of children are of paramount importance. It requires cooperation between Contracting States to the Convention for returning children to their state of habitual residence and establishing opportunities for transboundary parent-child access.

This convention came into force in Japan on April 1, 2014. Currently, 98 countries including Japan are parties to the Convention.

The convention is implemented through mutual cooperation among the governmental agencies designated as the Central Authority in Contracting States to the Convention. In Japan, MOFA as the Central Authority avails itself of experts in various fields and communicates/cooperates with foreign Central Authorities, and provides assistance to the parties such as locating whereabouts of the child and arranging mediation services aimed at amicable resolutions.

In the three years and nine months between the entry into force of the Convention and the end of December 2017, MOFA received a total number of 272 applications: 152 applications seeking the return of the child and 120 applications seeking access to the child. Of these, in 47

cases seeking the return of the child from Japan to another country, children were returned or conclusions not to return the child were reached. A conclusion was reached in 35 cases requesting the return of the child from another country to Japan.

In January and March 2017, study group meetings were hosted by the Director-General of the Consular Affairs Bureau, MOFA, in view of the three-year anniversary since the entry into force of the Convention. In these meetings experts with in-depth knowledge of the Hague Convention discussed Japan's implementation of the Convention to date and related issues. In the "Summary of Discussions" that was presented as the results of the seminars, it was evaluated that Japan has been implementing the Convention smoothly in general and also indicated points to be improved and the direction of reviews, etc. In February 2017, MOFA held the "Seminar on the Hague Convention for Diplomatic Missions in Tokyo" and in March a psychological

expert with expert knowledge on children's welfare in disputes was invited to Japan from Australia to share her insight with people involved in Japan's implementation of the Hague Convention. In addition, a meeting of the Special Commission (held once every five years) took place in October in The Hague, the Netherlands, which attracted representatives from 62 countries and regions and about 290 people. Japan attended the Commission and held discussions with various countries. Furthermore, MOFA, together with the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH), co-hosted the "Tokyo Seminar on the 1980 Hague Convention in Asia Pacific" in December. Frank and active discussions were held among participants from 14 countries and regions of Asia Pacific on the domestic framework required for acceding to the Convention and approaches to the proper implementation of the Convention, etc (see Column "Making the Hague Convention Widely Known: Public Relations Activities").

▶ **Number of Applications for Assistance Received by the Minister for Foreign Affairs Based on the Implementation Act of the Hague Convention (as of end-December 2017)**

	Application for assistance in child's return	Application for assistance in visitation or contact with child
Application concerning a child (children) in Japan	83	92
Application concerning a child (children) outside Japan	69	28

Column

Making the Hague Convention Widely Known: Public Relations Activities

The “Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction” (hereinafter referred to as “the Hague Convention”) entered into force in Japan on April 1, 2014. The Hague Convention Division of the Consular Affairs Bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs performs the role of the Central Authority of Japan under the Hague Convention. Based on the perspective that it is important to prevent children being inconsiderately removed due to a lack of awareness of the Hague Convention, the Hague Convention Division undertakes a various range of public relations activities aimed at making the Convention more widely known.

1. Seminars

The Hague Convention Division has been holding seminars nationwide for local municipalities, bar associations, the police, the immigration bureaus, the courts, domestic violence victims support groups and other entities since the Convention entered into force. In the fiscal year 2016, the Hague Convention Division explained the Hague Convention and the various types of its support to around 1,200 people in 34 locations. Furthermore, in June 2016, 64 specialists from 21 countries and regions, centering on the Asia-Pacific region were invited to the Asia Pacific Symposium on the 1980 Hague Child Abduction Convention, which was co-hosted by the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH), Waseda University, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Along with seeking to deepen the knowledge of those who are tasked with implementing the Convention and strengthen the implementation framework, the goal of the Symposium was to share the knowledge of Contracting States of the Hague Convention with non-Contracting States. In February 2017, the Seminar on the Hague Convention for Diplomatic Missions in Tokyo was held and attracted 77 participants from 59 countries, including 17 non-Contracting States. Additionally, in December, the Tokyo Seminar on the 1980 Hague Convention in Asia Pacific was held to encourage non-Contracting States in Asia to join the Convention and to promote establishing the environment for implementing the Convention for new Contracting States.

2. Leaflets

The Hague Convention Division created materials that include an A4-size pamphlet using manga comics to explain the Hague Convention in an easy-to-understand manner and a palm-size leaflet presenting an overview of the Convention. These materials are distributed through domestic related organizations, embassies in Tokyo, Japanese embassies/consulates abroad, and so on. The leaflet was translated in 13 languages: Japanese, English, Italian, Korean, Cantonese, Spanish, Thai, Tagalog, German, French, Beijing dialect,

Portuguese and Russian. Furthermore, in 2017, the Hague Convention Division newly created a leaflet for the parents whose children have been removed, and a poster in order to prevent the inconsiderate removal of children. In addition to these materials, it also created and broadcasted (in March 2017) an online advertisement and public-relations television program.



MOFA leaflet
"To parents traveling abroad with children / To parents returning to Japan with children"



MOFA leaflet
"For Parents Wanting to Bring Children Living Overseas Back to Japan or See Them"

In this way, the Hague Convention Division has been carrying out a variety of activities in order for more people to correctly understand the Hague Convention. It will continue to endeavor to carry out broader PR activities in order to prevent wrongful child removals by one parent.