

## Special Contribution

# Japan's Development Cooperation in the Future

Japan's future development cooperation must respond to a number of long-term challenges. Looking at the international community as a whole, Japan's development cooperation must contribute to the direction set by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 and the Paris Agreement on climate change formulated in the same year. It must also respond to the challenges thrust upon us by COVID-19 from which the world has been suffering since 2020. From the viewpoint of Japanese diplomacy, our development cooperation is expected to play a major role for the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" vision.

Whether the SDGs, climate change countermeasures, COVID-19 response and the FOIP while they are different initiatives, all of them are in fact very deeply interconnected. Unfortunately, COVID-19 is making it more difficult to achieve many of the SDGs globally. It has increased the world's population living in extreme poverty, which had been declining for decades. In the future, once the world has overcome COVID-19 we must reinforce initiatives to eradicate the extreme poverty in most of developing countries. Japan's development cooperation, which places importance on "human security," should lead such initiatives in the international community.

With regard to the issue of climate change, in 2021, the 26th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) reaffirmed the goal of limiting the increase in the global average temperature to below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Given that implementing climate change countermeasures is a new economic paradigm, Japan should promote creative climate change countermeasures in development cooperation that generate synergies with private investment. Disaster risk reduction is not only a major challenge for Japan itself, but also a major field in which Japan can contribute to the world.

Even in the post-COVID-19 world, the Indo-Pacific region will have the most dynamic potential for development. The great surge of growth that began in East Asia in the second half of the 20th century reaches beyond two oceans to sub-Saharan Africa. However, in the Indo-Pacific region, there are countries with extreme poverty, as well as vulnerable and unstable political societies. Japan needs to make efforts to address the challenges faced by the least developed countries and to support them to achieve the SDGs, while opening up future prospects by promoting human resources and infrastructure development. The great mission of Japanese diplomacy and development cooperation should be to "build back better" the post-COVID-19 Indo-Pacific region while maintaining a free and open order.

Japan has pursued "visible development cooperation" whereby it has dispatched Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) and JICA experts in various fields throughout the world and contributed to human resources development through training programs in both Japan and abroad. In the post-COVID-19 world, I hope to see once again that many Japanese play an active role and shine across various parts of the world.

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(Photo: KAWAMOTO Seiya)