

Foreword

The global landscape, including that surrounding Japan, is rapidly evolving across diverse fields. Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and the instability in the Middle East have further complicated international cooperation in addressing global challenges. Concurrently, strengthening partnerships with the Global South, whose influence among the international community is steadily increasing, has become even more crucial.

Against this backdrop, expectations of Japan from the rest of the world continue to rise. By fulfilling its roles and responsibilities across a wide range of fields, Japan will pursue “vigorous diplomacy with a broad perspective” that safeguards its national interests and elevates its presence on the global stage. To this end, Japan will strategically utilize ODA, a crucial instrument of its diplomacy, and advance tailored cooperation grounded in the priority policies of the Development Cooperation Charter, while taking into account the needs of partner countries.

The first priority is to achieve “quality growth” in the new era, for both Japan and developing countries. Japan relies heavily on overseas sources for many of its resources and cannot sustain prosperity in isolation. Through ODA, contributing to the peace and prosperity of partner countries and of the broader international community directly links to securing stable access to resources. This, by extension, advances Japan’s own national interests of peace, security, and continued prosperity. Japan’s diplomacy, including its ODA, also helps build trust with partner countries. As their economies grow and purchasing power rises, this in turn boosts exports of a wide range of Japanese products and services, including agricultural, forestry, and fishery products.

In addition, Japan will leverage new ODA mechanisms that promote the “Co-creation for common agenda initiative” and encourage private investments. By making priority investments aligned with the needs of each country, Japan will also address critical issues such as economic security, including the stable supply of energy and critical minerals.

At the 9th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 9), held in Yokohama in August 2025, discussions under the theme “Co-create innovative solutions with Africa” focused on harnessing Japan’s technology and expertise to develop solutions that would contribute to the prosperity of both Japan and Africa. Japan will steadily implement the initiatives announced at the conference and further deepen its relationship with Africa.

The second priority is to uphold and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law. Japan will continue to advance a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” as a central pillar of its diplomacy, adapting it to evolving global realities. FOIP aims to enhance connectivity across the Indo-Pacific region and foster a prosperous region free from force and coercion, where freedom and the rule of law are respected. Japan has supported efforts to strengthen connectivity in ASEAN - central to realizing FOIP and located at the heart of the Indo-Pacific - in both hardware and software terms. It has also advanced infrastructure development such as roads and ports in Southwest Asia. Working together with like-minded countries and public-private partners, Japan will continue to pursue practical and multifaceted cooperation, including strengthening connectivity, developing regional human resources, and providing capacity-building support, as it presses ahead with efforts for regional peace, stability, and prosperity, including through the “Economic Region Initiative of Indian Ocean-Africa” announced at TICAD 9.

Russia’s aggression against Ukraine is an outrageous act that shakes the very foundations of the international order. In close cooperation with the G7, Japan will continue to provide support tailored to Ukraine’s needs, drawing on Japanese expertise and technology, including in the areas of recovery and reconstruction.

The Middle East, including the Gaza Strip, remains unstable. Based on the trust Japan has built with Middle Eastern countries over the years, Japan will continue to engage in a range of diplomatic efforts for peace and stability in the Middle East, working in coordination with the countries concerned. With regard to the situation in the Gaza Strip, Japan will actively contribute to international efforts to improve the humanitarian situation and deliver early recovery and reconstruction.

The third priority is to lead international efforts to address global challenges that are becoming increasingly complex and severe. Drawing on the outcomes of the United Nations Summit of the Future held in September 2024, and based on the concept of human security, Japan will work to address challenges in areas such as climate change and the environment, global health, natural disasters, and food and energy, with a view to achieving the SDGs across the international community by 2030.

In order to vigorously advance these efforts, it is essential to improve and strengthen the systems and foundations that support ODA. In response to changes in the environment, including increasing private investment flows to developing countries and the growing diversification of development needs, the Act of the Incorporated Administrative Agency - Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) was partially amended in 2025. Japan will continue to promote the expansion of private investment, with ODA serving as a catalyst.

In 2025, the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JICA Volunteer Program) celebrated its 60th anniversary. This program, embodying Japan’s distinctive human-centric approach to development cooperation, has deployed more than 58,000 volunteers to 99 countries to date. Working side by side with local people in areas with challenging living conditions, these volunteers have tackled community development at the grassroots level and steadily accumulated significant results. The bonds and trust built with developing countries and the international community through this distinctive Japanese development cooperation are an irreplaceable asset for Japan. Furthermore, the contributions made by returned volunteers, leveraging the experience they gained at their postings across various fields both in Japan and abroad, are held in extremely high regard. Japan will continue to support the JOCVs so that their activities become ever more meaningful.

The White Paper on Development Cooperation 2025 offers the Japanese people an overview of Japan’s development cooperation over the past year. Public understanding and support are indispensable for ODA, which is funded by public resources. Japan will redouble its efforts to gain the understanding and empathy of the Japanese public regarding the significance and outcomes of ODA, including the ways in which ODA benefits not only partner countries but also Japan’s economy and the lives of its people. It is our hope that this White Paper will reach as many readers as possible and help deepen their understanding of Japan’s development cooperation efforts and their significance.

March 2026

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