
B. DOMESTIC PUBLIC OPINION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES, AND PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF JAPAN IN OTHER COUNTRIES

(a) Domestic Public Opinion and Public Relations Activities

For Japan to conduct diplomacy with the full understanding and support of its citizens, the government must provide the country with easily understandable information concerning the country's diplomatic activities, and also engage in a wide-ranging exchange of opinions with the Japanese people that will help the government develop foreign policies in step with the public.

With the trend toward increasingly close international relations in recent years, the range of items handled as diplomatic issues that directly affect the lives of Japanese citizens has been increasing, and Japanese citizens have shown a growing level of interest in Japan's foreign policies. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs must properly respond to this heightened interest and thus fulfill its accountability to the Japanese public.

Japan's foreign policies are being advanced while giving comprehensive consideration to rapidly changing domestic and overseas conditions and to the interests of diverse parties. Accordingly, it is extremely important that the diplomatic authorities provide citizens with the necessary information in an easily understandable format at the proper time in order to facilitate an accurate grasp of the background and content of specific policy measures. It is also important to provide citizens with information on new far-sighted diplomatic approaches that aim to maximize Japan's national interests and construct a better international order amid the current changes in the international community, which are occurring with bewildering rapidity. Thus, the government of Japan needs to make positive efforts to disseminate information to the Japanese people regarding its diplomatic policies.

Based on these perspectives, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is actively striving to provide Japan's citizens with diplomatic information in an easily understandable format, in order to gain their understanding and support and to develop foreign policies together with the public, as outlined below.

2. The address of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website is <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj>>.

First, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has established a Website,² and the ministry uses this to provide citizens with the most recent information concerning international affairs and Japan's foreign policy. This Website provides citizens with convenient direct access to useful, wide-ranging information including that on overseas travel and the conditions prevailing in each country and region. The number of people accessing this Website has been increasing, and the average number of hits per day reached approximately 1.14 million in 2001. In April, a "Foreign Policy Q&A" was added to the Website, enabling citizens to submit questions, comments, and opinions, and the ministry has been responding to the most frequently asked questions via the Website. In December, the ministry also launched a Website that can be accessed through cellular phones (an i-mode version of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website) to respond to the large increase, in recent years, in the number of Japanese who utilize their cellular telephones as information terminals.

Meanwhile, the government of Japan has been striving to provide easily understandable, highly detailed information regarding foreign policy issues deemed to be of particularly high interest to Japanese citizens, including the background to these issues, by cooperating with the editing of periodic publications, issuing pamphlets, producing public relations television programs, and other efforts.

Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been establishing opportunities whereby ministry personnel can directly discuss foreign policies with Japanese citizens through the "Gateway to Foreign Affairs," "Seminar on Foreign Affairs," "International Forum," and other lecture and discussion programs, and by holding symposia nationwide. To foster greater understanding of international affairs among the younger generation, the ministry has also been organizing lectures at universities and high schools, and hosting student group visits to the ministry.

(b) Promoting Understanding of Japan in Other Countries

To advance Japan's foreign policies, it is essential to promote an accurate understanding of Japan in general and of Japanese government policies among people in other countries, and to gain their trust and goodwill. Efforts have been made to promote a better understanding of Japan in other countries, and to introduce Japan's policies and the country of Japan itself; those efforts include implementing various public relations events through Japanese embassies and consulates-general; providing information to the foreign media; inviting opinion leaders and media representatives to Japan; as well as making the best use of multimedia tools such as the Internet.

When implementing public relations activities, the government of Japan carefully considers the information it provides and the most effective media to disseminate it, in accordance with the specific circumstances of each region, such as the level of interest in Japan, the depth of understanding about Japan, and the main areas of interest. To achieve these ends, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conducts public opinion surveys in major coun-

tries and analyzes the results to more accurately grasp the awareness of Japan in those countries.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs organizes lectures, symposia, and other public relations programs at its embassies and consulates-general to introduce information not only on Japanese politics, economy, and foreign policy, but also on Japanese arts and culture. During 2001, the ministry actively implemented such activities, for example, by dispatching Japanese experts to give lectures on the current condition of the Japanese economy and on Japan's approach to economic structural reform. The ministry also conducted PR activities featuring popular Japanese culture to appeal to foreign youth.

The government of Japan regularly supplies information to foreign correspondents based in Tokyo, and it provides the foreign media with wide-ranging information when Japanese government leaders travel abroad and foreign dignitaries visit Japan. When reports based on misperceptions or biases regarding Japan are made by the foreign media, the government of Japan states its position and views to that media, as necessary. The government also strives to advance understanding of Japan by inviting foreign opinion leaders and prominent journalists to Japan, inviting foreign television company personnel to Japan to report on Japan and produce TV programs, and otherwise introducing various aspects of the country to the foreign media.

Introducing Japan through the increasingly popular Internet is another important area of Japan's overseas public relations activities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website (English version)³ promptly posts information regarding visits by government leaders to and from Japan, international conferences, and other matters. The ministry also promotes understanding about Japan through the Japan Information Network Website,⁴ which introduces general information about the country. Many of Japan's overseas diplomatic missions provide information that is of interest to local residents in the local languages or in English through their own Websites. Moreover, the ministry's public relations programs are broadcasted in the Asia-Pacific and North American regions through broadcast satellites. Producing and distributing a wide variety of printed materials, videos, photographs, and other visual materials are also an essential part of Japan's overseas public relations activities.

3. The address for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website (English version) is <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/>>.

4. Japan Information Network: <<http://jin.jcic.or.jp/>>