
B. JAPAN'S DIPLOMATIC STRUCTURE

(a) Overview

As the globalization of the international community and the consequent interdependence among countries intensify, the volume of work handled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has increased. Diplomatic needs are growing and expanding in terms of both quality and quantity, and therefore, improving and strengthening Japan's diplomatic administrative structure has become an essential part of responding more actively and promptly to these needs. In 2001, MOFA addressed such issues.

(b) Strengthening Information-Gathering and Analysis

With today's constantly changing international situation, the accurate collection and analysis of information is crucial for Japan as it strives to carry out robust diplomacy and protect its national interests. The September 11 terrorist attacks in particular have further heightened the need to strengthen information-gathering and analysis structures. MOFA has built up a close network centered on its diplomatic missions, and it has used this to gather information from a broad range of areas and engage in comprehensive analysis of the international situation. Given the complexity and liquidity of the current international situation, however, efforts need to be made to further strengthen information-gathering and analysis functions. As part of the diversification of the means of information-gathering, the research on the use of satellite imagery is currently being advanced in order to ensure the effective use of the information-gathering satellite system that is scheduled for introduction in FY 2002 by the government of Japan. Staff has also been dispatched to the Cabinet Satellite Intelligence Center, which will operate the satellite system.

(c) Efforts Regarding Budgeting, Diplomatic Organizations, and Staffing

The absence of the FY 2000 extraordinary costs related to hosting the G8 Kyushu–Okinawa Summit reduced spending in the initial FY 2001 budget by 1.4 percent (or ¥10.8 billion) compared to the previous year, to ¥763.4 billion. Identifying the following two main pillars, MOFA worked to allocate the budget in a way that would enable the ministry to rise to the challenges of the current international situation and MOFA's priority issues:

- Improving and strengthening diplomatic policies (21st century challenges for the international community; promotion of Asia-Pacific diplomacy; promotion of further Official Development Assistance [ODA] reforms; and promotion of international cultural exchange)
- Strengthening Japan's diplomatic structure (increasing personnel; reinforcing diplomatic organizations; strengthening the functions of overseas diplomatic and consular establishments; and upgrading the information and telecommunications and communications networks)

With regard to organization, the ministry worked to achieve a more finely detailed approach to regional diplomacy. For Africa, which requires enhanced Japanese involvement, the ministry established the post of Director General for Sub-Saharan African Affairs in April. In addition, while Slovakian matters had previously been handled by the Japanese Embassy in the Czech Republic, a new embassy was established in Slovakia, reflecting that country's importance as a base for information-gathering in Europe. These developments brought the total number of Japan's overseas diplomatic and consular establishments as of the end of FY 2001 to 188: 116 embassies, 66 consulates-general, and six permanent missions or delegations.

In terms of staffing, the ministry has placed priority on strengthening the country's crisis-management and security systems as an urgent government matter. Despite strict budgetary limitations and the personnel situation, the ministry increased its personnel by 40 during FY 2001: 19 at the ministry itself and 21 at overseas diplomatic and consular establishments. This brought the total number of ministry staff to 5,329 (2,084 at the ministry itself and 3,245 at overseas diplomatic and consular establishments). While seeking to increase personnel, the ministry has also implemented efforts to utilize its staff more effectively and to rationalize administrative and clerical work.

(d) Advancing the Adoption of Information Technologies

With regard to the enhancement of information management, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has established a local area network (LAN)¹ that connects the ministry and Japan's overseas diplomatic missions. While ensuring proper security, the LAN will be expanded so that it can be accessed from all overseas diplomatic and consular establishments. Meanwhile, the ministry's Website will be further improved and expanded. The ministry will continue working in a comprehensive and systematic manner to advance the information management of its administrative functions in order to reinforce its information-processing capabilities and to improve its administrative services for Japanese nationals and others.

1. Also known as an in-house information and communications network. LANs connect computers within limited areas, such as in the same office or building, to facilitate the exchange of data and other matters. These systems provide various services such as the sharing of electronic mail and computer files.

(e) Crisis-Management System

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is making every possible effort to appropriately respond in full coordination with its overseas diplomatic missions to the emergency situations overseas that may threaten the lives of a large number of Japanese nationals, such as natural disasters, large-scale accidents, hijacking and terrorist incidents, kidnappings, civil unrest, coups d'état, and riots.

In regard to the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, emergency headquarters were immediately established within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the relevant diplomatic and consular establishments to engage in initial measures such as confirming the safety of Japanese nationals and gathering and analyzing information. Working in close contact with the emergency headquarters established within the Prime Minister's Office, the ministry launched a round-the-clock operation, exerting its utmost effort in crisis management, information assessment, the provision of information to Japanese nationals, the issuance of requests for assistance to the countries concerned, and other responses to the attacks. (See Chapter I, B-1 and 3.)

(f) Promotion of Information Disclosure

The Law Concerning Access to Information Held by Administrative Organs entered into force in April, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had received around 2,000 requests for information disclosure by the end of 2001. The law aims at ensuring that the government is accountable to the people for its various operations, and promoting fair and democratic administration through accurate understanding and criticism by the people. In accordance with the law, MOFA will work toward further information disclosures, while giving proper consideration to Japan's national security interests, trustful relations with other countries, and interest in diplomatic negotiations.

Further, the ministry has, ever since 1976, voluntarily released to the public postwar diplomatic documents that are at least 30 years old, and these are available for public viewing at the Diplomatic Record Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The ministry intends to further enhance this system whereby the documents related to individual items are voluntarily and collectively released to the public.

(g) Strengthening Support for the Foreign Business Activities of Japanese Companies

To create a favorable environment for Japanese companies engaging in overseas business, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has set up "business support contact points" in Japanese embassies and consulates-general. Through

those contact points the ministry is collaborating with local governments to secure fair treatment in the host countries, arranging opportunities for meetings between eminent figures in the host countries and representatives of Japanese affiliates, and providing relevant information. To further facilitate the business activities of Japanese companies operating overseas, the ministry also works with other governments to develop legal and institutional infrastructure through, for example, the conclusion of social security agreements.

In Düsseldorf, Germany (a Japanese population of around 7,000), for example, a questionnaire survey was conducted in February by the Consulate-General, eliciting wish-lists from around 450 Japanese companies in Düsseldorf and its environs concerning the living environment and their requests vis-à-vis local authorities. To realize the various items on those wish-lists, the Consulate-General took the initiative and established eight working groups comprising representatives from German regional and municipal authorities and the local Japanese community. Discussion by these groups produced a rich harvest, including institutional improvements such as the simplification of application procedures for residence and work permits, and the improvement of conditions of taxi use through the use of complaint and response postal cards.