

Message from the Minister for Foreign Affairs

Public interest in diplomacy rose remarkably among the Japanese people in 2003. Under the drastically changed international environment, national attention has been paid to policy regarding the military operation as well as subsequent humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in Iraq, and also the situation surrounding North Korea including the abduction and nuclear issues. Moreover, public discussion has also deepened in respect to Japan's relationship with the United States and neighboring Asian countries from various perspectives.

In carrying out foreign policy with a view to the recently enhanced interest in diplomacy, it is important that the government assumes its accountability to the people and gains their understanding and support. As a part of this effort, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has published the *Diplomatic Bluebook 2004*, which outlines the international situation and Japan's foreign policy over the past year. Reflecting on the past international situation and Japan's foreign policy is extremely important in considering how the international community and Japan's foreign policy should be.

The 2004 edition of the *Diplomatic Bluebook* concludes, through its review of the international community for 2003 in the beginning of Chapter 1, that the main concerns of the international community lay in the fight against terrorism and the prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means. It also summarizes that emerging differences among countries in their stances on the military operation against Iraq led to a turning point on the framework of international cooperation, which had been maintained in the fight against terrorism after the terrorist attacks in the US, and that how to balance the Japan-US alliance and international cooperation in implementing foreign policy became a serious challenge for Japan throughout the year. Following this review, Chapter 1 describes the situation surrounding Iraq, the issues regarding North Korea and the promotion of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). Subsequent chapters deal with Regional Diplomacy (Chapter 2), Japan's Foreign Policy in Major Diplomatic Fields (Chapter 3) and the Structure Supporting Japan's Diplomacy (Chapter 6). This year's version of the *Diplomatic Bluebook* also adds two new chapters: Widening Diplomacy (Chapter 4) and Assistance for Japanese Nationals and Companies Overseas (Chapter 5). These chapters introduce diversified diplomatic entities including NGOs, public opinion and public relations, and the various means of support to Japanese nationals and companies overseas.

Japan's foreign policy aims at securing the safety and prosperity of Japan and the Japanese people. To that end, it is essential that peace, stability and prosperity be realized in the international community. Based on this understanding, Japan is tackling the challenges that the international community faces. It was of immense grief that Ambassador Katsuhiko Oku, First Secretary Masamori Inoue and a local staff member Mr. Jerjees Sulaiman Zura lost their lives in the course of their duties of reconstruction activities in Iraq, which was one of the above-mentioned efforts, in November 2003. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest regret over the loss of these three people and offer heartfelt respect for their distinguished achievements.

I sincerely hope that this 2004 edition of the *Diplomatic Bluebook* will contribute toward enhancing the Japanese people's understanding of international affairs and Japan's diplomacy, and that it will deepen their understanding of the Foreign Ministry. In 2004, too, the Foreign Ministry is committed to demonstrating leadership in resolving challenges in the world as a responsible member of the international community.



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