

Message from the Minister for Foreign Affairs

The year 2004 was another year of numerous events in the context of international relations. Among those events were the challenges from acts of terrorism around the world, assistance for the reconstruction of Iraq by dispatching Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and providing Official Development Assistance (ODA), the North Korean nuclear and abduction issues, and so on. Questions also arose over Japan's rights and interests in its territorial waters. As the year came to an end, a major earthquake off the coast of Sumatra and the ensuing tsunami in the Indian Ocean took many lives, including those of Japanese nationals. In the face of these events, public interest in diplomacy has been rising. This is only natural, as the purpose of diplomacy is to protect the national interest, that is, to ensure the safety and prosperity of Japan and the Japanese people, and diplomatic activities cannot be pursued without involving people.

Given the heightened public interest in diplomacy, it is essential that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) fulfill its duty to explain its diplomatic policies to the public and gain greater understanding and support. Furthermore, when considering the proper course of the international community and Japanese diplomacy in the future, it is extremely important to reflect on past international events and Japan's previous diplomatic efforts. These ideas form the basis for the publication of *Diplomatic Bluebook 2005*.

Chapter 1 of this year's diplomatic bluebook opens with a description of major developments in the current international community and in Japanese diplomacy. A review of the international situation in 2004 follows, discussing the international community's fight against terrorism and efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery. During the year the United States (US) and Europe, which had held conflicting views over the use of military force against Iraq, sought to repair their relationship; meanwhile, the movement to implement reforms in the United Nations (UN) gathered momentum. Japan was active in the diplomatic sphere in 2004; while striving to strengthen the foundations of its security policies, Japan took an important step toward an appropriate new form of international peace cooperation through its support for reconstruction in Iraq and other activities. Japan also paved the way for stronger regional cooperation in East Asia through such means as economic partnerships.

Chapters 2 and 3 are devoted to "Regional Diplomacy" and "Japan's Foreign Policy in Major Diplomatic Fields," respectively. Chapter 4, "Japanese People Active in the International Community and Diplomatic Roles," describes the activities of Japanese citizens involved in international organizations and businesses as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Chapter 5, "Building a Multitiered Diplomatic Foundation," discusses organizational reforms in the Foreign Ministry and efforts to enhance Japan's creative capacity for policymaking while gaining the understanding and support of its citizens.

I hope this *Diplomatic Bluebook* will help to provide you with a deeper understanding of the international situation and Japan's diplomacy as well as the Foreign Ministry. Based on the fundamental awareness that Japan has a duty to play an important role in the international community, the government of Japan is determined to exhibit leadership in resolving problems facing the international community again in 2005, promoting diplomacy with integrity based on Japan's national interest.



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