

Message from the Minister for Foreign Affairs

In the policy speech I delivered at the Diet on January 20, 2006, I made a pledge to “make every effort to expound the aims of Japan’s diplomacy and ensure that these aims are transmitted at home and overseas.” In taking up these intense efforts to promote our diplomatic policy, it is critical that we carry out our responsibilities of explaining it to you, the Japanese people, and gain your increased understanding and support. This *Diplomatic Bluebook*, published annually, is a record of Japan’s diplomatic activities over the past year and, indeed, a fulfillment of the pledge I made a year ago.

Of particular note is that this year’s *Diplomatic Bluebook* is the 50th edition to be released, with the first *Bluebook* published in 1957. Fifty years ago, in the first *Diplomatic Bluebook*, published on the occasion of Japan joining the United Nations, the three main pillars of Japanese diplomacy were stated as diplomacy centered on the United Nations, collaboration with Free World nations, and adherence to its position as an Asian nation. The international setting in which Japan has found itself has certainly changed dramatically since that time, with the normalization of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China and the advancement of regional cooperation through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the European Community (the predecessor of the European Union), and, since the end of the Cold War, nuclear development by North Korea and Iran, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 on the United States, the worsening of poverty in Africa, and the trade liberalization that has come about as a result of the efforts at the World Trade Organization and economic partnership agreements. In keeping with these changes, the position and the role that Japan has played in international society has expanded dramatically, and it is this transition of Japanese diplomacy that these fifty volumes of the *Diplomatic Bluebook* describe.

On November 30 I delivered a speech in which I established a fourth pillar of Japanese diplomacy, adding to the three pillars, namely the Japan-US alliance, international cooperation, and an emphasis on neighboring Asian nations. Under the title of “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity,” I set forth a policy of working to create this Arc, a region that would be prosperous and stable with a foundation in universal values, stretching from Southeast Asia to South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe, and the Baltic states.

This year’s *Diplomatic Bluebook* features an explanation of the concept of this Arc of Freedom and Prosperity in the first half of Chapter 1. To enable this Arc to take shape, it will be necessary for us to concentrate new diplomatic efforts here in the years to come. The second half of Chapter 1 provides a general overview of international affairs and Japan’s diplomatic efforts in 2006. In particular, it provides a comprehensive survey of our response to the outstanding issues involving North Korea, the strengthening of our relationship with Korea and China, and our efforts regarding reform of the United Nations and efficient utilization of our overseas development assistance. Later chapters cover the topics of “Regional Diplomacy” (Chapter 2), “Japan’s Foreign Policy in Major Diplomatic Fields” (Chapter 3), and “Japanese People Active in the International Community and Roles of Diplomacy” (Chapter 4), a chapter which describes the activities of Japanese involved in international organizations, businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and more. “Japanese Diplomacy Backed by Public Understanding and Support” (Chapter 5) introduces our efforts to provide information about diplomatic policy to the public and stay attuned to the views of the Japanese people. It also explains the improvement of the infrastructure that is necessary for conducting diplomacy.

I have long said that a comprehensive strengthening of our diplomatic effectiveness is necessary so that we can engage in diplomatic efforts with even greater impact. But for that to happen, it is critical that you, the people of Japan, understand what it is that we are engaged in. I believe that this *Diplomatic Bluebook* will be of great help in elucidating the Ministry’s efforts.

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