



CHAPTER 2

Regional Diplomacy

1. Asia and the Pacific

The realization of an Asia-Pacific region that is prosperous, stable, and open is indispensable for the security and prosperity of Japan. For that reason, it is important to promote proactive diplomacy vis-à-vis Asia based on solid Japan-U.S. relations so that stability and growth can be realized sustainably in Asian nations.

Having overcome the economic crisis of 1997, Asia has ridden the wave of globalization to attain continuous high economic growth, with its intraregional mutual economic interdependence deepening through the expansion of its manufacturing industries' production networks. The creation of a sense of community within the region is also emerging through the permeation of shared lifestyles, increasingly dynamic people-to-people exchanges, and the expansion of pop culture. Against such a backdrop, there have been increasingly intense discussions in recent years regarding the formation of an East Asian community. Yet despite such positive developments, common regional challenges such as international terrorism and piracy, energy issues, and pandemic influenza and other infectious diseases have also emerged, while the recent financial crisis and global economic downturn have negatively impacted the Asian region. In addition, the situation on the Korean Peninsula and other aspects of the security environment remain difficult to predict.

Furthermore, China and India, accounting for one-fifth and one-sixth of the world's population respectively, are rising to the forefront in such fields as politics, security, and economy. Constructively educating the potential of these two countries in ways that contribute to the stability and sustainable growth of both Asia and the world is a major issue for Japan.

The basic objective of Japan's diplomacy in Asia and the Pacific is to share fundamental values in the region, and to forge a stable and prosperous region in which long-term predictability is ensured, based on

mutual understanding and cooperation, together with other countries. Towards this end, Japan is implementing the following three fundamental principles in its diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region.

Firstly Japan will further reinforce the Japan-U.S. alliance, which is the cornerstone of Japanese diplomacy, while fostering peace and prosperity in Asia and the Pacific together with other countries including the U.S. In the realm of security, Japan will continue to ensure deterrence against any movement that might destabilize the region by firmly maintaining the Japan-U.S. Security Arrangements, which are critical for the security of the region. In addition, Japan will promote proactive diplomacy vis-à-vis Asia by strengthening its future-oriented relations with neighboring countries, such as China and the Republic of Korea (ROK).

Secondly, in order to deal with common regional issues, in addition to bilateral diplomacy, Japan will promote regional cooperation by engaging actively in frameworks for East Asian regional cooperation, such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)+3, Japan-ASEAN, and Japan-China-ROK cooperation, and in frameworks with broad participation by countries outside the region, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

Thirdly, Japan will squarely face the facts of its history with humility, that in the past it has caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people in Asian nations. With feelings of deep remorse and heartfelt apology always engraved in mind, and as a forerunner in consistently making efforts for more than 60 years since the end of World War II as a peaceful nation underpinned by its solid democracy and market economy, Japan will continue various kinds of cooperation, including efforts for the consolidation of peace, reinforcement of governance, and development of eco-

conomic rules, while supporting the development of an Asia grounded in sharing fundamental values such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

The Korean Peninsula, being adjacent to Japan, is one of the most important geographical areas for Japan, which is located in the Northeast Asian region. The ROK is Japan's closest neighbor geographically and also an important neighbor with whom Japan enjoys extremely close relations in various areas, including politics, economy, and culture. The ROK, like Japan, is an ally of the United States, and it also shares with Japan fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, and basic human rights. Further strengthening future-oriented, friendly, and cooperative relations is critical for the stability and prosperity of not only Japan and the ROK but also the Northeast Asian region as a whole.

In 2008, at a summit meeting held upon the inauguration of President Lee Myung-bak in February, the leaders shared the intention to carry out "shuttle summit diplomacy," and four summits were convened altogether, the first being held on the occasion of President Lee's visit to Japan in April. In addition, there were advances in multi-layered and close inter-governmental dialogues and private-sector level exchanges across a broad range of fields, including three Japan-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meetings. Furthermore, Prime Minister Taro Aso visited the ROK in January 2009, with the leaders confirming that they would build the bilateral relationship towards a "mature partnership".

As for North Korea, Japan's basic policy is to aim to normalize Japan-North Korea relations through the comprehensive resolution of outstanding issues of concern including abduction, nuclear and missile issues and the settlement of the unfortunate past between the two parties, in accordance with the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration. Under this policy, the government of Japan has been making its utmost diplomatic efforts to achieve progress in both the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and Japan-North Korea bilateral relations, including the abduction issue.

There was a certain degree of progress in the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in June 2008, including North Korea's submission of a declaration of its nuclear programs to China, the chair country of the Six-Party Talks, as well as the work toward the disablement of North Korea's nuclear facilities. However, North Korea has not demonstrated a positive stance towards establishing a concrete framework for

verification, which is important in achieving a verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Japan will continue to make tenacious efforts in cooperation with relevant countries toward forging the concrete framework for verification among the six parties.

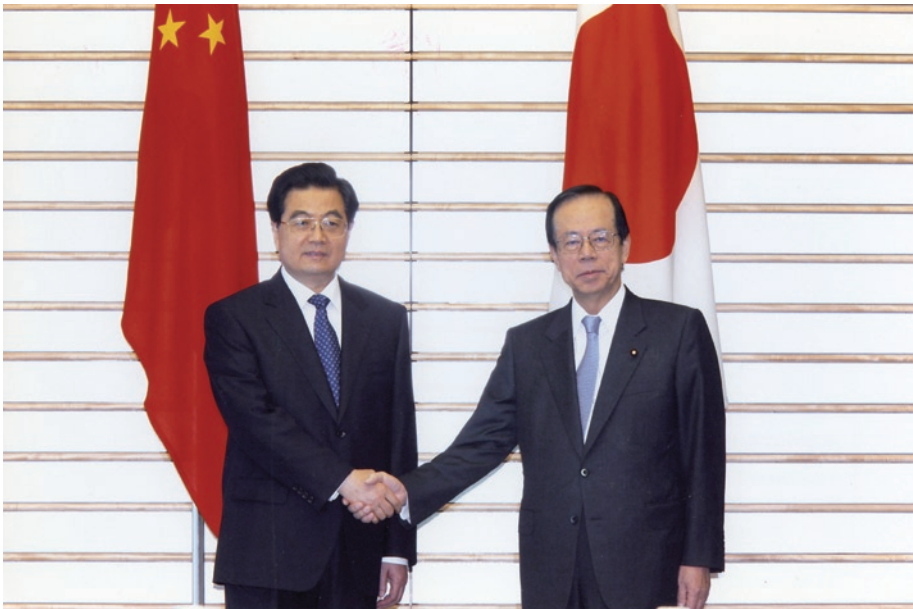
In addition, in Japan-North Korea bilateral relations, Japan-North Korea Working-level Consultations were convened twice in 2008, with agreement reached on North Korea beginning a full investigation into the abduction issue as well as the concrete terms for this investigation. However, in September North Korea communicated to Japan a communication that, while North Korea remained committed to fulfilling the agreements made at the Working-level Consultations, they would suspend the launch of the investigation. Since then, Japan has repeatedly urged the North Korean side to begin the investigation at an early date, but the investigation still has yet to be started. Japan will continue to cooperate and collaborate closely with other relevant countries by utilizing the Six-Party Talks and other diplomatic opportunities, in order to conduct sincere bilateral discussions with North Korea and also to demand of North Korea concrete actions towards the resolution of the outstanding issues, including the abduction issue.

The interdependence between Japan and China is growing deeper, with economic relations and people-to-people exchanges becoming increasingly close. Within this context, the Japan-China relationship is one of the most important bilateral relationships for both countries. The year 2008, which was the 30th anniversary of the conclusion of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and the People's Republic of China, was a historic year in which frequent dialogues were held by the leaders of Japan and China. This included five mutual visits by the leaders, notably the visit of President Hu Jintao to Japan in May, which was the first visit to Japan by a Chinese President in the past ten years. Japan and China steadily promoted the creation of a "Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests" through the strengthening of mutually beneficial cooperation in the fields of the environment, energy, and criminal and consular matters; the fostering of mutual understanding and mutual trust through expansions of various types of exchanges, including mutual visits by youth and exchanges between middle-level officials as well as exchanges in the field of security; and promoting cooperation in the region and the international community regarding North Korean issues, international economic and financial matters, and other is-

sues. Regarding resource development in the East China Sea, as the first step in realizing the common understanding between the leaders of Japan and China to make the East China Sea a “Sea of Peace, Cooperation and Friendship,” an agreement was announced in June regarding joint development in the northern waters and participation of Japanese corporation(s) in the development in the specific area of Shirakaba (Chinese name: Chunxiao) oil and gas field where the Chinese side has already begun development operations on the Chinese side of the median line. In addition, regarding Chinese-made frozen dumplings, melamine, and other food safety issues, Japan has repeatedly urged China to respond appro-

priately to these important issues affecting the lives and health of both Japanese and Chinese citizens, and both countries concur on the importance of close bilateral cooperation in this area.

In the future, Japan and China will further develop their bilateral relations by building up dialogues and exchanges at a full range of levels and appropriately addressing outstanding issues. The two countries also intend to continue to contribute jointly to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the region and the international community through the creation of a “Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests.”



Prime Minister Fukuda (right) meeting with President Hu (left) (May 7, Tokyo, Japan; photo: Cabinet Public Relations Office, Cabinet Secretariat)

In Japan's relations with Mongolia, increased emphasis has been placed on strengthening cooperation in the area of economy. Both countries have been engaged in efforts such as dialogues at various levels, including Japan-Mongolia Foreign Ministers' Meetings and policy dialogues between the countries' Ministries of Foreign Affairs as well as joint private-public sector consultative meetings, conducted with a view to fostering economic relations that are equally favorable as the political relations between the two countries.

ASEAN, aiming to build an ASEAN Community by 2015, has been accelerating its integration efforts. On December 15, the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN's fundamental document giving a legal status to ASEAN, en-

tered into force.

ASEAN holds a geopolitically important position and has become a major player in the Asia-Pacific region in light of deepening mutual economic interdependence. ASEAN has played a major role in East Asian regional cooperation thus far, and ASEAN integration and development will be extremely important for the stability and prosperity of both Japan and the region. From this perspective, Japan will continue to support ASEAN's integration efforts.

Japan is also strengthening its relations with individual member states of Southeast Asia in various areas, including politics, economy, and culture. Specifically, in 2008 exchanges of views were held frequently with national leaders, including two summit meetings

held with Dr. H. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of Indonesia and summit meetings with Mr. Choummaly Sayasone, President of the Lao PDR and Secretary General of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, and Dato' Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia. At the Foreign Minister level, a Japan-Mekong Foreign Ministers' Meeting was convened for the first time, a Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held with Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam (CLV), and comprehensive policy dialogues were held at the Japan-Viet Nam Cooperation Committee to expand the mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries. Active dialogues and exchanges have been forging ahead at a high level, such as Foreign Minister Nakasone's visit to Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Thailand in January 2009.

In the area of economic partnerships, the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) Agreement, Japan's first such multilateral agreement, entered into force. Bilateral Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, and the Philippines also entered into force. In August, Japan accepted Indonesian nurse candidates and care worker candidates for the first time, based on the Japan-Indonesia EPA. Regarding a Japan-Viet Nam EPA, the two sides came to share common views on most of the major issues in September and signed the Agreement in December.

On the cultural front, the year 2008 marked the 35th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Viet Nam, the 55th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Cambodia, and the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Indonesia. The year 2009 is the Mekong-Japan Exchange Year, with a wide spectrum of commemorative events taking place in Japan and the Mekong countries.

The South Asian region embraces India, the world's largest democracy, and has been steadily increasing its presence in recent years with its regional population of roughly 1.5 billion people and its high rate of economic growth for the region as a whole. In the economic realm in particular, the region holds the potential for further development in the future and has attracted a high level of interest from the international community, with a central focus on India, a member of the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, and China). At the same time, this region is faced with issues such as democratization, peacebuilding, and counter-terrorism. There is no negative historical legacy in its

relations with Japan, and many countries of the region have traditionally been pro-Japan, supporting Japan in elections at international institutions and numerous other occasions. Furthermore, the region is of geographical importance to Japan because of its location in sea lanes connecting Asia and the Middle East. Therefore, it is important for Japan to foster close cooperative relations with this region.

In 2008, while the countries in South Asia experienced many noteworthy developments in the democratization process through the holding of elections, large-scale terrorist attacks also occurred frequently. In particular, the terrorist incident in September targeting a luxury hotel in Pakistan and the terrorist attack in Mumbai, India in November, in which the victims included a Japanese citizen, resulted in a large number of casualties among foreign nationals and had substantial impact on international society. The Mumbai attacks in particular had a deep impact on India-Pakistan relations. Counter-terrorism is an urgent issue not only for the South Asian region but also for the entire international community. Japan engages in close exchanges of views and supports confidence-building in the region so that terrorism does not result in regional instability.

Since South Asia is an important region for Japan, Japan engages in proactive diplomacy in both its bilateral relations and within multilateral frameworks. In its relations with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the sole regional framework in South Asia, Japan actively supports regional development and stability based on the three pillars of support for the efforts for democracy and peace-building, support for promoting regional connectivity and promotion of people-to-people exchanges.

Australia and New Zealand are Japan's important partners in the Asia-Pacific region with shared basic values. In particular, Japan has enhanced the comprehensive strategic partnership with Australia through promoting practical cooperation in political and security areas, aside from the economic relationship centered on trade in natural resources and food. Pacific island countries share the Pacific Ocean with Japan and have served as an important source of marine resources for Japan. Japan has steadily strengthened its relationship with these countries including through high-level visits. Japan also decided to hold the fifth Pacific Islands Leaders' Meeting (PALM5) in Hokkaido in May 2009.

In 2008 cooperation advanced within each of East Asia's frameworks for regional cooperation.

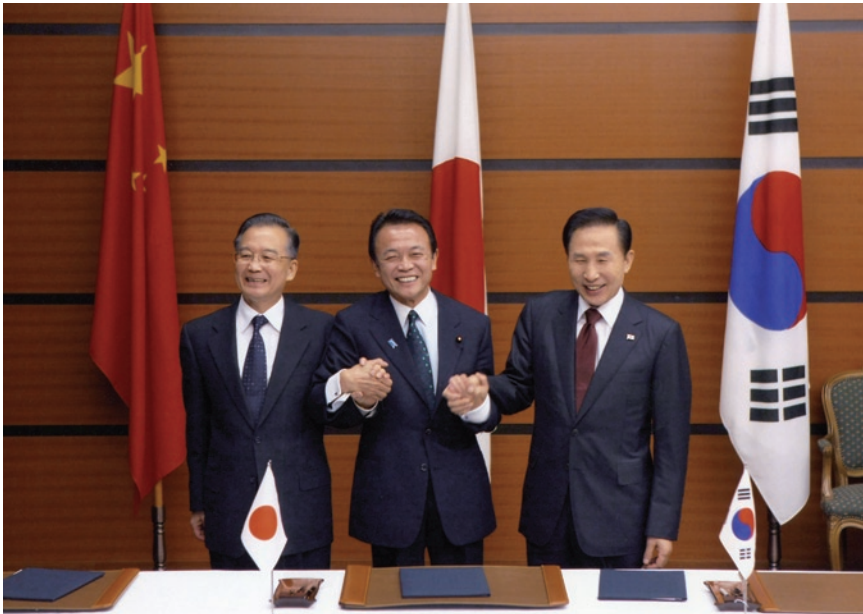
Various types of cooperation in such areas as energy security, climate change and the environment covered by the East Asia Summit (EAS) continued to advance steadily in 2008. At the EAS Foreign Ministers' Informal Consultations in July, the progress of such cooperation and future directions were discussed.

At the Seventh Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM7) in October, the leaders issued the Statement of the Seventh Asia-Europe Meeting on the International Financial Situation as their common message to the international community regarding the international financial crisis that worsened rapidly after the "Lehman Brothers shock" in September. On that occasion, an informal breakfast meeting among the heads of state and government of the ASEAN+3 countries was convened on short notice through the initiative of relevant countries including Japan, enabling an exchange of views on Asia's recognition of the current situation and responses.

Furthermore, at the 16th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in November, the Lima APEC Leaders' State-

ment on the Global Economy was adopted, with the leaders sharing the common intention to effectively address the financial crisis, including the impact on the real economy.

In addition, in December, Japan-China-ROK summit talk, which had until then taken place only in association with ASEAN+3 Summit Meetings and other such diplomatic events, was held independently for the first time in Fukuoka as the Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit. At this Trilateral Summit, the leaders also shared the common intention to strengthen cooperation in the area of international finance and economy. The leaders of the three countries also signed the Joint Statement to strengthen trilateral cooperation in a forward-looking manner so as to raise Japan-China-ROK cooperation to a higher dimension, and released the document on disaster management cooperation and the Action Plan for Promoting Trilateral Cooperation among the People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea.



Premier Wen of China (left), Prime Minister Aso (center) and President Lee of the Republic of Korea (right) at the Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit (December 13, Fukuoka, Japan; photo: Cabinet Public Relations Office, Cabinet Secretariat)

2. North America

Japan and the United States are allies sharing fundamental values and strategic interests and the Japan-U.S. alliance is the cornerstone of Japanese diplomacy. The Japan-U.S. alliance, with the Japan-U.S.

Security Arrangements at the core, has brought peace and prosperity to Japan and the Far East for more than 60 years since the end of World War II and has functioned effectively as the fundamental framework

supporting stability and development in the Asia-Pacific region. In the Asia-Pacific region, which continues to have elements of instability after the end of the Cold War, the Japan-U.S. alliance plays an indispensable role as the cornerstone for the peace and prosperity of Japan and the region.

Japan and the U.S. have further deepened their relations in a broad range of fields by appropriately tackling bilateral issues. They have also taken advantage of various opportunities to act in close cooperation to ensure the peace and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region and to address global issues facing the international community. The Democratic Party candidate Barack Obama, who called for “change,” was elected in the presidential election in November 2008, and the new U.S. administration was inaugurated in January 2009. Japan has also begun to forge a close partner-

ship with the new Obama administration, taking advantage of various opportunities.

Japan and Canada cooperate closely in such fields as politics, the economy, security and culture as partners in the Asia-Pacific region, sharing fundamental values and also as members of the G8. With 2008 marking the 80th anniversary of Japan-Canada diplomatic relations, Japan-Canada exchanges were promoted through various types of commemorative events and the bilateral relationship was further strengthened through Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s first visit to Japan in July and the holding of a bilateral summit meeting. At this meeting, the leaders of the two countries agreed to coordinate the visit of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress to Canada in the summer of 2009.

3. Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean region embraces an economy of 3.1 trillion U.S. dollars in GDP (three times that of ASEAN) and a population of 560 million. The region enjoys growing economic presence in the world with an annual economic growth of approximately 5% in the past five years (4.6% in 2008). The region has also been gaining greater international attention as suppliers of minerals including rare metals, energy, and food.

Japan has traditionally had good relations with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean region, based on people-to-people links including those with Japanese immigrants and their descendents in the region. In addition, Japan has been supporting the consolidation of democracy and economic development in Latin America and the Caribbean countries, which has helped make its relations with such countries even closer. In recent years, the Latin American and the Caribbean countries have generally enjoyed stable democracy and steady economic growth based on a market economy and they have had more influence in the international community. Today, the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean region, with which Japan shares fundamental values, have become important partners for Japan in the international community. Under these circumstances, Japan pursues its diplomacy towards this region based on three pillars: (i) strengthening economic relations; (ii) contributing to the stable development of the region; and (iii) promot-

ing cooperation in the international arena.

As for strengthening economic relations, the Japanese government, accurately assessing the circumstances of Japanese companies and the local situation, supports the activities of Japanese companies through the development of legal frameworks such as Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and bilateral investment agreements as well as through consultations with host governments.

To realize stable development in Latin America and the Caribbean region, Japan actively supports the efforts of governments in the region to resolve deep-rooted problems of poverty and social inequality by means of financial assistance and technical cooperation in their efforts. At the same time, Japan helps those governments to pursue sustainable economic development.

The 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean region have significant influence over decision-making at the United Nations and other international fora, and Brazil, Mexico, and other emerging economies in particular have been increasingly important players in international politics and economy. Given this, the government of Japan works closely with the countries of this region in tackling global issues to which Japan attaches importance, such as the environment and climate change, human security, and reform of the United Nations Security Council.

4. Europe

Sharing fundamental values such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, Japan and Europe are strategic partners with leading roles in fostering the stability and prosperity of international society. It is important for Japan to advance cooperation and further strengthen bilateral relationships with the countries of Europe, notably the United Kingdom (UK), France, Germany, and Italy, which are members of the G8, as a means of strengthening the foundation upon which the international community effectively responds to global issues amidst the current international situation with its numerous elements of instability, including the economic slowdown and recession resulting from the impacts of the financial crisis, and security threats such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In addition, Japan shares numerous fields and geographical areas of concern with both the European Union (EU), which has increased its influence through advancements in integration and taken an active role in international discussions regarding the issues surrounding Georgia and the financial crisis, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which has undergone changes in its character since the Cold War, expanding its area for fostering peace and stability beyond Europe and the Atlantic region to Afghanistan and other locations. It is important for Japan to further advance its political dialogues and cooperation with these entities at a full

range of levels. In addition, Japan is utilizing regional frameworks to move forward with dialogues and cooperation in political and economic fields with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic states.

In June, Prime Minister Fukuda visited Germany, the UK and Italy. In holding substantial consultations with the leaders of these countries and fostering personal relationships of trust, he laid extremely important stepping stones that also contributed to the success of the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit in July. In October, Prime Minister Aso attended the Seventh Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM 7), where the strengthening of the cooperation between Asia and Europe in addressing the financial crisis was reaffirmed.

Many leading European political figures also visited Japan, including visits at the head of state and government and foreign minister levels of the UK, France, Germany, Italy, and the EU (the Presidency of the Council of the EU and the European Commission) on the occasions of the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit in July and the G8 Foreign Ministers' Meeting Kyoto in June, confirming cooperation in the area of climate change and various other fields. It is important to deepen favorable Japan-Europe relations into increasingly concrete cooperative relations by continuing to hold close exchanges of views with European countries and institutions.

5. Russia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus

In Russia, since President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin assumed office in May, the overall management of the political administration has been stable with no essential changes appearing in the direction of its foreign policy. In its diplomacy towards Asia, Russia has in recent years been adopting a policy to advance development of Far East Russia and Eastern Siberia and strengthen its relations with the Asia-Pacific region. Russia's activities in this region have become increasingly dynamic on both the security and economic fronts. Although the Russian economy has continued to grow and Japan-Russia economic relations have been expanding smoothly, impacts of the financial crisis began to appear at the end of 2008.

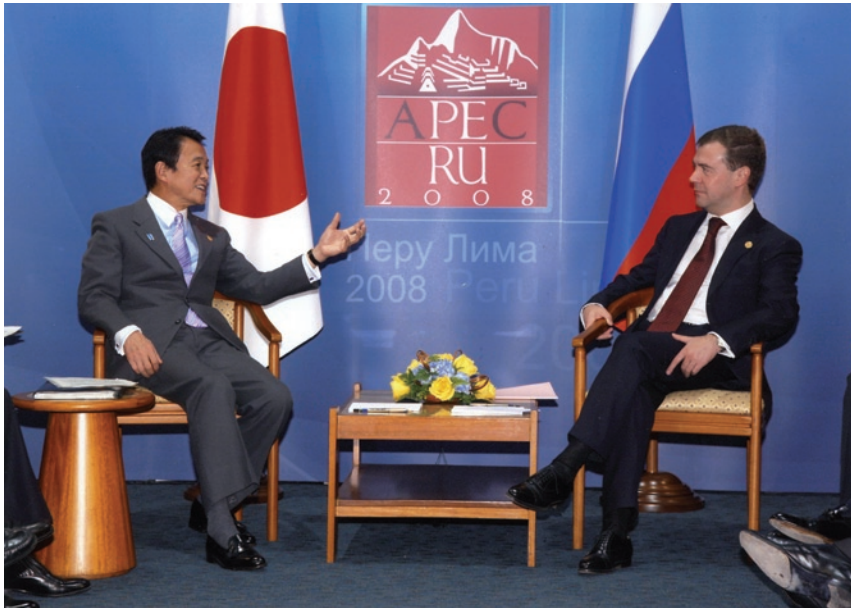
Russia is an important neighboring country for Japan, and enhancing cooperation and partnership between Japan and Russia within the Asia-Pacific region

is not only consistent with both countries' strategic interests but can also contribute to the stability and prosperity of the region. In Japan-Russia relations, cooperation is advancing across a broad range of areas based on the Japan-Russia Action Plan, with political dialogues being held frequently at various levels, including summit meetings and foreign ministers' meetings, and the economic relations between the two countries developing steadily.

In order to contribute to stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region, the Japanese government has been engaging in intensive negotiations with the Russian government with the strong intention to reach the final solution of the Northern Territories issue, the greatest outstanding issue between the countries, so that Japan and Russia can establish a relationship at a higher level where both countries can grow together in the region.

In August 2008, the armed clashes between Georgia and Russia regarding South Ossetia occurred in the Caucasus region, which captured the attention of people around the world. Because of its abundant energy resources and its geopolitical importance of being situated on a crossroads bringing together Asia and Europe as well as Russia and the Middle East, the stability and the prosperity of Central Asia and the Caucasus region have become an important issue of concern for not only Japan but also for the interna-

tional community. In June, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of Kazakhstan visited Japan, during which the foundations for mutually beneficial relations were expanded. Japan continues to support efforts of the Central Asia and Caucasus countries towards democratization and transition to a market economy, based on the concept of the “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity”, through bilateral means as well as through the framework of the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue and others.



Prime Minister Aso holds a meeting with Russian President Medvedev (November 22, Lima, Peru; photo: Cabinet Public Relations Office, Cabinet Secretariat)

6. The Middle East and North Africa

Peace and stability in the Middle East region are issues directly affecting the peace and prosperity of the international community as a whole. Ensuring the stability of this region is also extremely vital for the energy security of Japan, which imports approximately 90% of its crude oil from the region.

While the Middle East region saw positive developments in 2008, including economic growth in the Gulf states against the backdrop of rich petroleum resources and improvements in the security situation in Iraq, challenges still remain, such as the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan and Iran's nuclear issue. In addition, Israel's military attacks on the Gaza Strip that began on December 27 once again indicated the instability of the situation in the region. Furthermore, the dramatic rise and fall in the prices of crude

oil and the global financial crisis have also brought significant impacts to the regional economy.

Against this backdrop, Japan is proactively engaged in Middle East diplomacy in cooperation with the international community, pursuing the two main goals of working to ensure stability in the Middle East and ensuring Japan's energy security.

Japan has also been further developing its relations with the countries of the Middle East on the axis of the economic front, centered on energy. Japan is now promoting efforts to build multi-layered relations in a broad range of fields such as politics, culture, and science and technology.

In May, Foreign Minister Koumura visited Afghanistan and announced that Japan, as the chair of the G8, would support coordination and cooperation between

the international community and the government of Afghanistan with regard to assistance to Afghanistan.

In July, Japan proactively engaged itself in efforts for the Middle East peace process, hosting the third Ministerial-Level Meeting of the Four-Party Consultative Unit for the Initiative of the “Corridor for Peace and Prosperity” in Tokyo, in addition to other efforts.

In October, Japan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) served as co-chairs of the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) “Forum for the Future” Ministerial Meeting held in the UAE. Foreign Minister Nakasone and State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Seiko Hashimoto led discussions on assistance for re-

form in the Middle East and North Africa region and responses to the international financial crisis.

State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Hashimoto and Special Envoy of the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited Iraq in December 2008 and January 2009 respectively, holding consultations to further develop the long-term friendly relationship between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Republic of Iraq over a broad range of fields, after the Japan Self-Defense Forces completed their five-year mission in Iraq. The Declaration on Establishing a Comprehensive Partnership between Japan and Iraq was announced during the visit of Special Envoy Abe.

7. Africa

The year 2008 was historically important for both Japan and Africa. Japan took a leading role in international discussions on African development by hosting the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) in May and the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit in July. Mutual visits at the summit and ministerial levels between both sides were frequently held. For example, Foreign Minister Koumura visited Tanzania in January, followed by Special Envoy of the Government of Japan (former Prime Minister) Yoshiro Mori, who attended and delivered a speech at the Tenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union held in Ethiopia. In March, Foreign Minister Koumura visited Gabon and in April the Tenth Meeting of the Africa Partnership Forum was convened in Tokyo. In September, Special Envoy of the Government of Japan, Mr. Mori participated in the High-level Meeting on Africa’s Development Needs at UN and made a speech as one of TICAD IV followup-related activities.

While positive signs such as progress toward peace and stability and strong economic growth have been seen in Africa in recent years, issues including poverty and conflict, political instability, infectious diseases, terrorism, and organized crime remain serious. The global financial crisis and economic downturn are also impacting the countries of Africa in various ways. It is the responsibility of Japan, as a country holding an

important position in the international community, to make efforts in order to resolve these issues. These efforts are also significant in deepening cooperative relations with Africa, which has been increasing its presence in the international community. Relations with Africa, with its abundant natural resources and an enormous, ever-increasing population, also carry great significance for the future of the Japanese economy.

Under this recognition, Japan proactively supports the efforts of African countries to resolve their own issues in both the political and the economic areas, of (1) boosting economic growth and reducing poverty and (2) achieving the consolidation of peace and good governance. This policy remains unchanged even amidst the global financial crisis, and Japan will steadily implement its assistance measures announced at TICAD IV and the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit.

Understanding and support from the people of Japan are essential for the Japanese government to address African issues actively. In this regard, the government of Japan conducted a broad range of public relations activities for TICAD IV and the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit. As a result, the percentage of the Japanese public feeling affinity with African countries reached its highest level ever.