

Message from the Minister for Foreign Affairs

It is important to look back and record accurately and objectively the international situation surrounding Japan and the path Japan's diplomatic efforts have taken. This is a key foundation upon which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs not only fulfills its accountability to the public but also leaves for future generations a recorded summary of Japan's diplomatic efforts for the year. Based on this recognition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has published *Diplomatic Bluebook 2009*.

The year 2008 was for Japan a year of diplomacy with few equals in history, as Japan hosted both the G8 Summit, an occasion arising once in eight years, and the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), which convenes once in five years. Utilizing this opportunity, Japan demonstrated powerful leadership within the international community towards resolving common challenges we face, which brought Japan high regard from around the world. Moreover, to address the growing financial crisis, Japan put forward a concrete proposal at the Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy in November based on its own experiences, and in December, the Japan-China-Republic of Korea (ROK) Trilateral Summit Meeting was held independently of other international meetings for the first time, elevating Japan-China-ROK cooperation to a new dimension. I myself have been making efforts to further Japan's proactive diplomacy by visiting New York during the opening of the United Nations General Assembly session immediately after taking office and attending the High-Level Event on the Millennium Development Goals and other diplomatic engagements, as well as holding meetings with the Foreign Ministers of the United States of America, China, and Pakistan.

In this year's *Diplomatic Bluebook*, Chapter 1, "Overview," contains a review of the international situation and Japan's diplomatic efforts in the year 2008. "Regional Diplomacy" and "Japan's Foreign Policy in Major Diplomatic Fields" are reported in Chapters 2 and 3, respectively, recording diplomatic activities and the international situation. Chapter 4, "Japanese People Active in the International Community and Roles of Diplomacy," addresses the topic of Japanese nationals and Japanese companies active around the world and the efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support them. Finally, Chapter 5, "Japanese Diplomacy Open to the Public," describes the Ministry's activities to enhance diplomatic capacity comprehensively, including its partnerships with local authorities and the strengthening of its diplomatic implementation structures.

Japan's foreign policy aims at ensuring Japan's national interests, namely the security and prosperity of Japan and the lives and property of the Japanese people. I believe that our foreign policy should also aim to preserve the nation's honor and prestige and to ensure that citizens can hold pride in their nation. Japan's science and technology capabilities, its human resources, and its history of overcoming numerous difficulties are all points of pride on the world stage. Now, as the international community faces a growing number of challenges, Japan is pursuing proactive diplomacy. I firmly believe that Japan's proactive diplomacy and its accomplishments in the international community will lead to the Japanese people gaining confidence and pride in their own nation.

In order to implement such a robust diplomacy, it is necessary to have the understanding and support of the Japanese people with regard to the international situation and Japan's foreign policy, as well as the roles of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I hope that this *Diplomatic Bluebook* would be of assistance in this regard.



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Minister for Foreign Affairs