



## CHAPTER 4

# Japanese Diplomacy Open to the Public

### 1. Strengthening the Foreign Policy Structure and Japanese Citizens Playing Active Roles Abroad

In order to secure its national interests and properly address various challenges in the international community, Japan needs to strengthen its foreign policy structure, and to coordinate with various internationally active organizations, as well as to promote an “all-Japan” effective diplomacy.

To this end, it is necessary to make efficient and effective use of limited human and physical resources while securing a sufficient budget and human resources required for the diplomatic activities. Japan must also constantly revise its foreign policy implementation structure to respond appropriately to changes in the strategic environment that are being accelerated by the increasing international influence of emerging countries such as China, India, Brazil and South Africa, and to maintain and create an international order desirable for Japan.

From these perspectives, to optimize Japan’s foreign policy implementation structure, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is promoting further rationalization and efficiency measures based on the results of budget screening and administrative work reviews. In this regard, the Ministry established a task force on Japan’s overseas establishments in June, which has conducted a review on the role of diplomatic missions. Consequently, it was announced that while continuing to review existing diplomatic establishments and to take cost-cutting measures, Japan will work to open new overseas establishments with the aim of developing its foreign policy implementation structure on a par with those of other major countries. For more efficient and effective human resource allocation, Japan will also reassign overseas diplomatic personnel to the countries where Japan needs to reinforce its foreign policy implementation structure, such as newly emerging economies,

resource-producing countries, and countries where new diplomatic establishments has been opened.

The Japanese government is working to strengthen partnerships with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as important actors in international cooperation in efforts to develop “all-Japan” diplomacy. NGOs’ importance is growing in recent years as bodies providing assistance to developing countries in view of rising public interest in international cooperation. Japanese NGOs are implementing highly refined assistance attuned to local residents’ needs for carrying out poverty reduction and humanitarian assistance activities, primarily in Asia but also in other regions of the world including Africa and the Middle East. Based on their knowledge such as the present conditions of developing countries, NGOs are engaged in a wide range of activities in addition to on-site assistance, forming NGO networks and making policy recommendations in various fields like human rights, education, health, and the environment.

The Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) and Senior Volunteers (SVs) are also important players in international cooperation, working toward the resolution of problems that developing countries face by striving together with local people. These volunteers’ activities are visible representation of Japan’s ODA in developing countries and widely appreciated around the world, playing significant roles in promoting economic and social development of those countries, and fostering mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and developing countries. The knowledge and experience that returning volunteers bring back to Japanese society is also bearing fruit. Systematic reviews are being conducted to ensure better JICA volunteer programs.



*A JOCV nutritionist talking with an indigenous woman called a Cholita in Bolivia (photo: Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA))*

## 2. Supporting Japanese Nationals and Companies Overseas

Approximately 16 million Japanese citizens travel overseas each year. The number of Japanese living abroad has also been increasing year by year, and has reached about 1.13 million (as of October 2009). A large number of Japanese nationals are active in many fields in the world. This also results in the increase and the diversification of the risks and dangers Japanese face abroad. To protect the lives and properties of Japanese nationals overseas understanding that it is an important mission of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to understand that it, and it implements various measures to ensure that Japanese can live and work abroad safely and securely.

The Ministry collects and provides wide-ranging information concerning the security and the sense of safety of Japanese abroad, including information on accidents and crimes such as terrorist attacks and kidnapping cases, wars and conflicts, natural disasters, and the spread of infectious diseases. The Ministry also calls on individual Japanese national to raise awareness of crisis management and take their own safety measures. In cases where Japanese

nationals are involved in dangers, meanwhile, the Ministry continues to strengthen systems and infrastructure to provide effective assistance to the utmost extent.

In addition to issuing passports and various types of certificates, handling overseas voting, and providing other fundamental administrative services through Japanese embassies and consulates in each country, the Ministry supports the basics of the daily lives of Japanese nationals residing overseas by such activities as giving assistance to Japanese schools and supplementary education schools and providing medical and healthcare-related information. These measures are important services for Japanese people and enterprises conducting or expanding activities overseas.

The presence of Japanese immigrants and their descendants - who have long contributed to the development of their countries of residence and helped strengthen bilateral ties as "bridges" between Japan and those countries - constitutes an important asset for advancing diplomacy for establishing Japan

as an open country. Japan continues to support Japanese immigrants and their descendants.

Amid the changing international economic environment with the advance of globalization and the rise of emerging economies, it is extremely important for Japan to strengthen the competitiveness of Japanese enterprises and individuals overseas to achieve a strong economy. Actively supporting Japanese enterprises has become particularly important in recent years, with the advance of

economic partnership worldwide and the rising demand for infrastructure, especially in Asia. The Ministry is using its overseas establishments and other channels to gather opinions from Japanese enterprises on the issues they are facing overseas to better respond to their inquiries and requests. The Ministry also holds dialogues and discussions on regulatory reform and improvements to the business environment with different countries to call for further improvement in these countries.



*An event held in Singapore to introduce Japanese food (February 25-27, 2011)*

The Ministry works toward the improved use and operation of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) taking into consideration requests from Japanese enterprises overseas, and it conducts periodic reviews to make sure EPAs are implemented properly. The Ministry is working to lessen the burdens of Japanese enterprises and nationals overseas by concluding social security agreements to resolve the problems of duplicate social insurance contributions to two countries and

of lapsed contributions. As part of the initiative to establish Japan as an intellectual property-based country, the Ministry is working to strengthen protection of the intellectual property of Japanese enterprises by conducting such activities as reaching out to other countries through both bilateral and multilateral consultations, based on complaints from Japanese enterprises that are being damaged by counterfeit and pirated goods.

### 3. Providing Information to the Public and the Internationalization of Japan's Local Society

In implementing foreign policies, gaining understanding and support from the public is crucial. Accordingly, it is essential to give timely and lucid explanation on such subjects as the specific contents of foreign policies and the role of the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. To that end, the Ministry strives to communicate accurate information through various media, including newspapers, magazines, TV and the Internet.

In addition to daily press conferences held by the

Foreign Minister, State Secretaries for Foreign Affairs and the Press Secretary, statements by the Foreign Minister and the Press Secretary as well as press releases are made available to the public. On top of these means of information transmission, the Ministry's three political-level appointees led by the Foreign Minister appear on TV and in other media as much as possible to communicate Japan's foreign policies directly to the public.

The Ministry updates its website (<http://www.mofa.go.jp>) constantly to provide accurate information in speedy and user-friendly manner. On the occasion of the 2010 Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings in Japan, the Ministry established an official site "APEC JAPAN 2010" and set up its official channel on a video-sharing website for video transmission, by so doing the Ministry exerted efforts to distribute information in the way that the public can easily access. "Foreign Minister's Section", which was inaugurated on the Ministry

website in December 2010, vividly introduces the Minister's activities through video-clips, maps, and the like. As the Ministry attaches importance to distributing information in multiple languages, it provides information not only in English on its website but in other local languages as well on the websites of Japanese diplomatic missions in the countries where those languages are spoken.

The Foreign Minister presents speeches at several venues throughout Japan as part of a "public relations through dialogue with citizens", while Ministry officials present lectures and debate sessions at universities and senior high schools nationwide. The Ministry launched the foreign affairs journal entitled *Diplomacy* in September 2010 with the aim of sparking up discussions regarding diplomacy. The Ministry is also working to improve two-way communication with the public through activities such as gathering comments and opinions through its website and conducting public opinion surveys.



*Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara at a regular press conference (January 14, 2011, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Tokyo, Japan)*

In its efforts to ensure accountability to the Japanese people, the Ministry has been disclosing diplomatic records and information, while giving due consideration to relation of mutual trust with other countries. In June 2010, the Ministry formed the Committee for the Promotion of Declassification of the Diplomatic Historical Records with participation

of some experts and has since been working to facilitate speedy declassification of records that were preserved for more than thirty years. Local governments and communities play a major role in fostering good international relations across a wide range of fields. In recent years, local governments, organizations, and citizens have been actively

engaged in diverse activities that are earning a high degree of recognition in the international community. Local governments and communities are playing an extremely important role as diplomatic actors promoting international mutual understanding, building trust-based relationships, and strengthening the Japan brand.

The Ministry regards local governments and communities as major partners in promoting diplomacy, and it aims to work with them to direct all-Japan efforts toward enhancing the country's comprehensive diplomatic capacity. The Ministry implements various cooperative measures with local governments and other concerned parties to achieve those goals, placing particular emphasis on (1) strengthening information sharing and communications, (2) jointly promoting major diplomatic policies together with local governments and communities, and (3) cooperating with international measures taken by local governments and communities. Through these steps, the Ministry hopes to help revitalize local regions and contribute to resolving the problems facing local governments and communities.

Meanwhile, it is important for the Government of Japan to address the increasing number of foreign nationals entering and residing in Japan. The number of foreign nationals entering Japan reached about 9.44 million in 2010, nearly twice the level of 2000 (about 5.27 million). The number of foreign nationals residing in Japan for a long-term (registered foreign nationals) was about 2.19 million at the end of 2009, which is about 1.3 times the level in 2000 (about 1.69 million).

Visas are issued at Japanese embassies and consulates-generals to foreign nationals with no

probable harms to immigration control. In principle, foreign nationals entering Japan with visas must undergo an immigration inspection at the ports of entry into Japan and show valid passports and visas. In response to the above-mentioned increase of foreign nationals visiting Japan, the Ministry is working to expedite visa issuance to individuals entering Japan for business or tourism with no probable harm to immigration control. On the other hand, the Ministry conducts stringent screening for visa applications in cases of any suspected illegal employment or human rights violations of foreign nationals. In addition to visa for Chinese group tourists, visas for Chinese individual tourists have been issued since July 2009.<sup>1</sup> In July 2010, visa requirements for Chinese individual tourists have been relaxed, in line with the government initiative to establish Japan as a tourism-oriented country. Against the backdrop of this, the total number of visas issued from July through December 2010 reached 35,578, a 4.6 fold increase compared to the same period in the previous year.

The Ministry has begun issuing a "Visa for Medical Stay in Japan" from January 2011 realizing objectives set out in the New Growth Strategy approved by the Japanese Cabinet in June 2010, to make it easier for foreign nationals to visit Japan for medical treatment purposes.

As the number of long-term foreign residents in Japan increases, various problems are emerging in such fields as education, employment, and housing. To address these issues, the Ministry has been holding international symposiums and workshops together with local governments, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and other bodies since 2005.