

## Section 3

# Diplomacy with the Support of the Public

### 1 Proactive Communications to the Public

#### (1) Overview

Public understanding and support are indispensable for the smooth implementation of Japan's foreign policy. As such, providing prompt and clear explanations on the policy details and on the role of the government is crucial. Accordingly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) is making efforts in timely and effective public relations, using various forms of media, lectures, publications and others.

#### (2) Providing Information through Domestic Media

MOFA has committed itself to promptly and accurately providing information through various media, such as newspapers, television and the Internet, in order to gain the understanding and support of Japanese nationals for Japan's foreign policy. To provide information effectively, regular press conferences are conducted by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Press Secretary, while extraordinary press conferences are held as necessary. Press conferences by the Foreign Minister are open to various media including Internet media, and the records and videos of the press conferences are posted on MOFA's website. During foreign visits by the Prime Minister or the Foreign Minister, MOFA provides information



Press Conference by Foreign Minister Hayashi  
(November 11, Tokyo)

#### Dissemination of Information through Press Conferences

Minister for Foreign Affairs	101 times
Press Secretary	40 times
<b>Total</b>	<b>141 times</b>

\*From January 1 to December 31, 2021

#### Dissemination of Information through Documents

Statements by the Minister for Foreign Affairs	24 times
Statements by the Press Secretary	50 times
Press releases by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1,453 times
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,527 times</b>

\*From January 1 to December 31, 2021

from visiting countries/regions via multiple means, including the Internet, so that people can promptly follow and understand the details and the outcomes of the visits. MOFA also regularly releases

statements by the Minister for Foreign Affairs or Press Secretary on individual international issues, expressing the position of the Government of Japan. Similarly, MOFA frequently provides press releases on its daily diplomatic activities. Additionally, the Minister and State Ministers for Foreign Affairs explain the Government's foreign policies directly to the public through appearances on various media and interviews.

### (3) Information Provision through the Internet

MOFA's website (in Japanese and English) is a way to promptly provide information on the diplomatic activities of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister as well as on Japan's foreign policy including territory/sovereignty, recognition of history and security along with the latest international relations and other basic relevant information.



MOFA's official website  
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/index.html>



MOFA's official twitter account  
[https://twitter.com/MofaJapan\\_en](https://twitter.com/MofaJapan_en)



MOFA's official facebook account  
<https://www.facebook.com/Mofa.Japan.en>



MOFA for Kids  
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/kids/index.html>  
 (Japanese language website only)

MOFA's official website



MOFA's official facebook account



MOFA's official twitter account



MOFA for Kids



MOFA's website in the Japanese language provides a variety of contents for Japanese nationals across a wide range of age groups, including the "Anything Report from Around the World," "Find Out about International Situations" and "MOFA for Kids." In particular, "MOFA for Kids" publishes contents for young people such as videos and quizzes to explain MOFA's activities in an easy-to-understand way, and Q&A corners explaining vocabularies and international issues that are covered frequently in the news and newspapers.

In addition to these, MOFA provides a variety of information through various social media platforms. In 2021, as face-to-face activities were significantly constrained due to the impact of COVID-19 for two years in succession, efforts were made to provide information through the Internet, such as live streaming of the regular press conferences by the Foreign Minister and

posting of video messages delivered at international conferences on social media.

#### (4) Dialogue with Japanese Nationals

With the notion of "Public Relations through Dialogue," MOFA promotes direct dialogue between the people of Japan and the Foreign Minister, the State Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and MOFA officials.

In December, Foreign Minister Hayashi and Japanese staff who serve as heads or in other positions of the Japanese offices of international organizations, and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Uesugi Kentaro and Japanese staff of the Japanese offices of UN agencies inside the United Nations University building, sat around a table respectively and held lively discussions



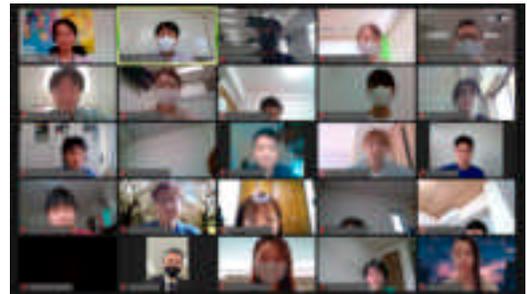
Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Suzuki responding to a question from a "child reporter" on "Children's Kasumigaseki Tour Day" (August 18 and 19, MOFA)



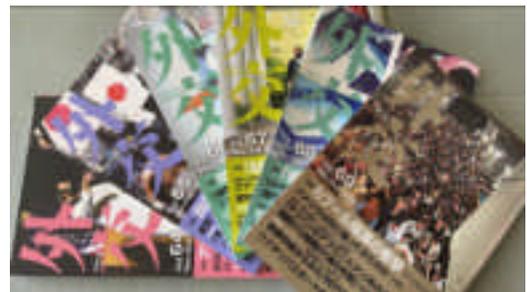
Lectures on the International Situations (October 7, UN Association of Japan Fukuoka Head Office)



One of the Diplomatic Talks (June 28, Kagawa University)



One of the Diplomatic Talks (June 28, Kagawa University)



Periodical journal "Diplomacy"

regarding the activities of the organizations and their partnerships with Japan.

At the “Dialogue with Students,” a MOFA seminar for university students and others held online in February, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Suzuki Hayato gave an opening address, and Foreign Ministry officials exchanged views with a large number of the participating students during the lectures. At the “Children’s Kasumigaseki Tour Day” held online in August, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Suzuki answered various questions from elementary and junior high school students regarding diplomacy and other matters in the “Children’s Press Conference.”

Various programs in which MOFA sends its officials to venues such as international exchange organizations, universities and high schools throughout Japan were conducted online (some in-person) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Among them are “Lectures on the International Situations,” “Diplomatic Talks,” “Talks for High School,” “International Issue Presentation Contest” for university students and “Visits by elementary, junior and senior-high school students to MOFA.” Through these programs, MOFA is working to promote better understanding of foreign policy and international affairs among young people, who will bear the future of Japan on their shoulders.

MOFA officials also give lectures on Japan’s ODA policies and specific measures to numerous schools in online “ODA Delivery Lectures.” Additionally, MOFA publishes the periodical journal “Diplomacy,” widely sharing information on discussions taking place in various areas and at various levels concerning diplomacy and international affairs relevant to Japan. In 2021 the journal took up a range of diplomatic challenges as themes, such as the outlook for the post-COVID-19 world, climate change and economic security, and featured a large number of essays and other articles from renowned experts both inside and outside Japan.

Moreover, MOFA also produced various easy-to-understand pamphlets for a broad readership as well as videos in order to promote a deeper understanding on the organizational structure and foreign policies of MOFA. In addition to the above, MOFA hears comments and opinions from the public through its website. Comments and opinions from the public are accordingly shared within MOFA and used as a reference in policy making and planning.

#### **(5) Promotion of the Declassification of Diplomatic Records and Access to Information**

To further enhance the public understanding of and confidence in Japan’s foreign policy, MOFA is actively engaging itself in the smooth transfer of records and their declassification. In addition, MOFA has been engaged in efforts to facilitate greater convenience in the public use of diplomatic documents.

MOFA preserves more than 120,000 historical materials, including 40,000 prewar historical documents in its Diplomatic Archives and has declassified its postwar diplomatic records since 1976 as a voluntary initiative. The Rules on the Declassification of Diplomatic Records, which were established in May 2010, stipulate: (1) the declassification of diplomatic documents created more than 30 years ago in principle and (2) the establishment of the “Committee for the Promotion of the Declassification of the Diplomatic Records” which is chaired by the State Minister for Foreign Affairs or the Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs as well as attended by external experts, to further promote the declassification of diplomatic records and improve its transparency. The number of files that have been transferred to the Diplomatic Archives and made public since then reached approximately 36,000 by the end of 2021.

Furthermore, MOFA discloses information pursuant to the Act on Access to Information Held by Administrative Organs, while giving

considerations to national security, the relationship of mutual trust with other countries, the impact on diplomatic negotiations and the protection of personal information. In 2021, MOFA received 1,245 requests for disclosure, and documents totaling 81,068 pages were disclosed.

## 2 Strengthening the Foreign Policy Implementation Structure

As Japan faces drastic changes in the power balance of the international community, the rapid development of an ever more severe and uncertain security environment surrounding Japan, and the increasingly fluid international situation caused by the global spread of COVID-19, MOFA must enhance its foreign policy implementation structure while also looking ahead to the post-COVID-19 world, in order to vigorously advance diplomacy for maintaining and developing an international order based on universal values. To that end, MOFA is strengthening both the quantity and quality of its diplomatic missions overseas, and reinforcing the organizational and personnel structures at its headquarters. In addition, as human resources are a key asset to diplomacy, and as distribution of limited resources in terms of personnel, budget and time must be focused on diplomatic activities that can only be carried out by staff members, MOFA is promoting digitalization, work efficiency and productivity, in line with the priority areas to be reinforced over the next five years.

Diplomatic missions overseas, such as embassies and consulates-general, not only represent Japan, demonstrate its presence and engage in diplomatic activities, but also play a key role in areas such as information-gathering and strategic communication at the frontline of diplomacy. At the same time, overseas missions also carry out operations directly related to enhancing the interests of Japanese nationals, such as protecting their lives and safety, providing support for Japanese companies, promoting investment and

tourism, and securing energy and other resources. In response to COVID-19, overseas missions disseminate relevant information to a broad group of Japanese abroad in a timely and appropriate manner through their websites, e-mails and other mediums, such as Travel Advice and Warning on Infectious Diseases, country and region-specific infection situations, and restrictions on entry and movement.

In January 2022, Japan established a consulate-general in Da Nang in Viet Nam. As a result, the number of diplomatic missions overseas as of FY2021 is 230 (153 embassies, 67 consulates-general and 10 permanent missions). Da Nang is achieving remarkable economic growth, and the numbers of Japanese companies in operation and Japanese nationals living there are both increasing. Additionally, Da Nang occupies an important position on the security front facing the South China Sea. Since it is situated at the starting point of the East-West Economic Corridor, Da Nang is recognized as one of the important strategic locations toward realizing “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” Japan will deepen its relations with the Da Nang region in a multi-layered manner by establishing a base for information gathering on security and economic affairs in the area.

In FY2022, Japan will establish a new embassy in Kiribati. As a key junction in the South Pacific, Kiribati has an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) that is the largest among Pacific Island countries and the 12th largest in the world. Deepening Japan-Kiribati cooperative relations is essential for the realization of FOIP. Furthermore, Kiribati is an important partner that has often supported Japan’s position at international fora. It is vital that Japan establish an embassy there to continue maintaining and strengthening the favorable bilateral relationship and enhancing the system for more effective gathering of various information and provision of assistance in emergency situations.

In addition to establishing more diplomatic missions overseas, it is important to secure and

Special Feature

## The 50 year journey of the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Diplomatic Archives is a facility of MOFA for preserving, publishing, compiling and displaying historically important materials. It was founded on April 15, 1971, and celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2021.

MOFA has always been aware of the importance of referring to past negotiations and precedents. In 1870, a year after the ministry was established, a bureau was set up to manage documents, and ever since, MOFA has placed an emphasis on classifying and preserving diplomatic records. Ishii Kikujiro who once served as Foreign Minister said "Whether documentation is complete or not determines final success in foreign policy." Those words symbolize the ministry's stance of attaching importance to documents, in that the management of documents can even influence the outcomes of diplomacy. Additionally, following World War I, the U.S. and European countries embarked on making the background to diplomatic events available to the public, including by publishing compilations of diplomatic documents, and MOFA likewise began disclosing diplomatic documents. The first such volume was published in 1936, and MOFA carries on the work of compiling the Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy (Nihongaikobunsho) up to the present day.

With this foundation of managing and publishing documents, and amid the growth in interest in the historical facts of Japan's foreign policy after the end of World War II, the Diplomatic Archives was opened in 1971 as a facility for providing access to historical documents from the pre-war era that had been kept in MOFA. Subsequently, from 1976 MOFA began disclosing post-war diplomatic records as a voluntary initiative, and furthermore, in May 2010 the transfer and disclosure of post-war diplomatic records were advanced significantly, as a result of an independent MOFA rule stipulating that records created or received more than 30 years ago will in principle be made available to the public. When the Diplomatic Archives was initially established, it held only about 50,000 files from the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate through to the pre-war Showa Period, but the number of files now exceeds 110,000. The historical documents held at the Archives range from the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Japan and the United States, which was signed in 1858, to records of post-war diplomatic negotiations, such as negotiations relating to the reversion of Okinawa and the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China. The custody of records of more recent periods is also being steadily transferred to the Diplomatic Archives, which is making them available to the public. The Public Records and Archives Management Act (enforced in April 2011) positions public documents as "an



Front entrance of the Diplomatic Archives



MOFA records concerning Japan-U.S. negotiations just prior to the start of the Pacific War (The Archives holds over 100,000 files of this kind).



The Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Japan and the United States (an Important Cultural Property), which was concluded at the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

intellectual resource to be shared by the people in supporting the basis of sound democracy” and makes it mandatory for the historical documents held in the Diplomatic Archives to be preserved in perpetuity. At the Archives, steady efforts have been made on a daily basis to arrange documents, control their environment and restore them in order to preserve the common property. The historical documents that have been passed down present the journey of Japan’s foreign policy, and serve as material to understand Japan’s history.

The Diplomatic Archives has been making much effort not only to preserve historical documents, but also to promote their active utilization. The Archives provide access to a broad range of historical facts through the Reading Room’s reference support, publishing the series of “Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy,” holding exhibits of precious historical documents, and making documents available on the Internet in response to the demands of the times. Making large amounts of highly reliable historical documents available to the public and verifying historical facts are important also in terms of encouraging an amicable resolution to issues of the recognition of history. Diplomatic documents are very important in nurturing Japanese history and building a future of international goodwill. The Diplomatic Archives will continue endeavoring to make its facilities available to as many people as possible.

### Diplomatic Archives

5-3, 1-chome, Azabudai, Minato Ward, Tokyo, 106-0041 Japan

Opening hours: 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

(Excludes Saturdays, Sundays, national holidays, Year-end and New Year Holidays (December 28 to January 4), and days on which the Diplomatic Archives announces that it will be temporarily closed. (The opening hours could be changed due to the situation of COVID-19. We may recommend checking the latest information on our website or by telephone.))

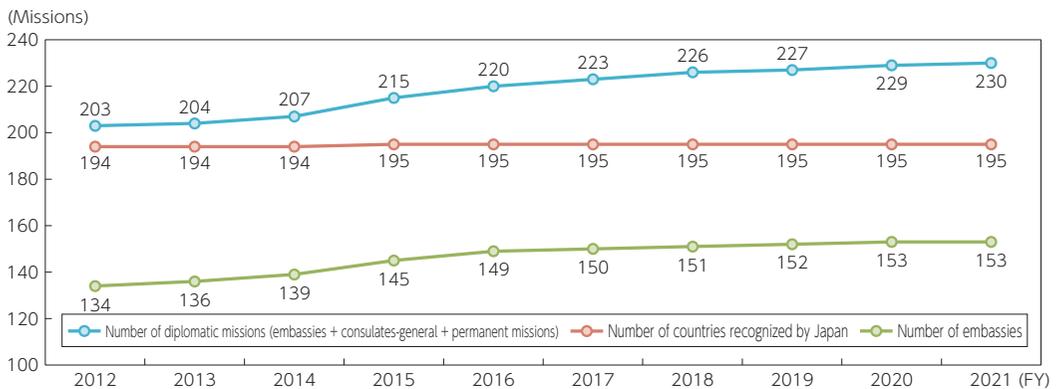
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/about/hq/record/index.html>



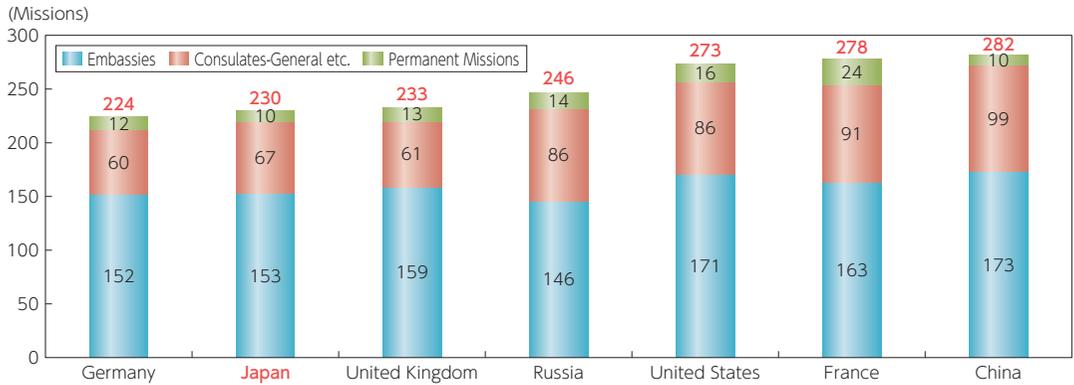
increase the number of staff members to support diplomacy at the MOFA headquarters and diplomatic missions overseas. In the context of the Government’s policy to reduce the overall personnel expenses due to the current severe budget situation, the number of staff members at MOFA was increased to 6,430 in FY2021 (6,358

in FY2020) in order to address bilateral relations and regional situations, advance Japan’s Proactive Contribution to Peace policy, conduct strategic communications, promote economic diplomacy, contribute to addressing global issues, and implement protection and safety measures for Japanese nationals abroad. The number of staff members,

### Changes in the Number of Diplomatic Missions

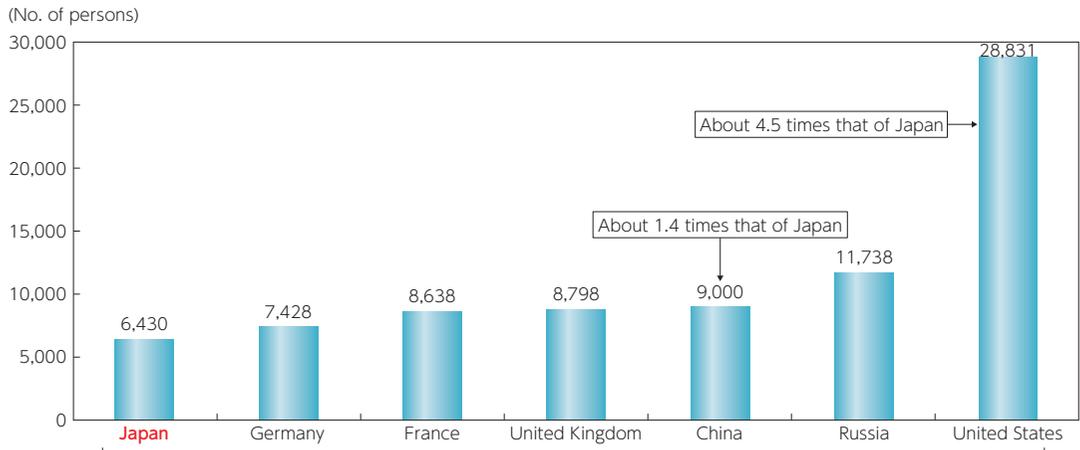


Comparison of the Number of Diplomatic Missions of Japan with Major Countries



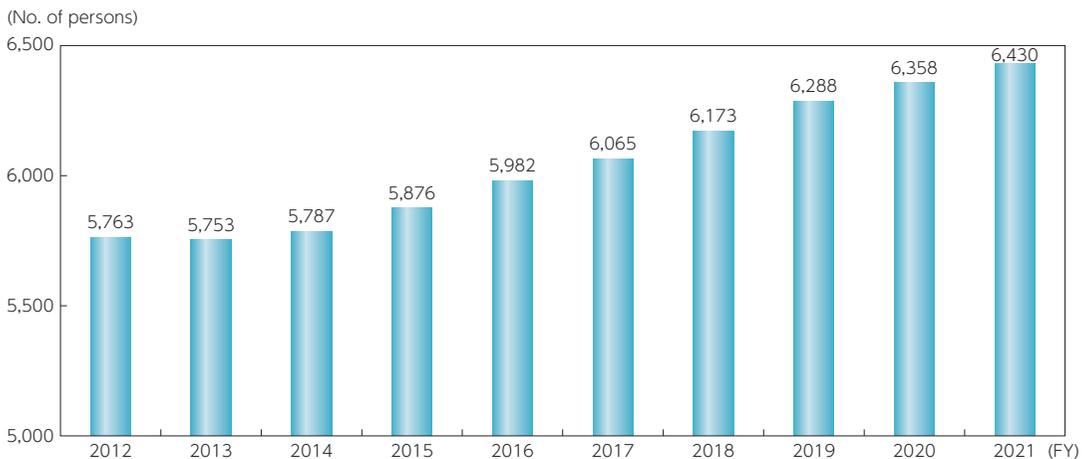
Note: As of January 2022 Average number of diplomatic missions among these seven countries: Approximately 252

Comparison of the Number of Staff Members at Ministries of Foreign Affairs in Major Countries



\* based on the FY2021 survey result, etc.

Number of Staff Members at MOFA



however, remains insufficient in comparison with other major countries. MOFA continues its efforts to build a structure that is commensurate with Japan's national power and diplomatic policy. In the meantime, based on the belief that enhancing the foreign policy implementation structure remains essential in FY2022, MOFA will increase its workforce by 74 staff.

MOFA appropriated 709.7 billion yen in the budget for FY2021 (of which 13.8 billion yen related to digital is appropriated in the budget of the Cabinet Secretariat and later the Digital Agency) in order to overcome COVID-19 and advance "diplomacy with robustness and a sense of caring." In addition, MOFA appropriated 146.4 billion yen in the supplementary budget for FY2021 (of which 4.1 billion yen is appropriated in the Digital Agency budget). The funding appropriated in the budget included contribution to the COVAX Facility's Advance Market Commitment (AMC). Accordingly, Japan pledged 800 million US dollars at the COVAX AMC Summit in June. Furthermore, MOFA appropriated funding mainly to support developing countries in Asia, Oceania, the Middle East, Africa and other regions in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and improve their humanitarian situation, and for supporting the overseas expansion of Japanese companies.

MOFA's FY2022 initial government budget proposal appropriated 707.4 billion yen (of which a digital-related budget of 17.0 billion yen is appropriated in the Digital Agency budget) based on the following priorities: (1) overcoming COVID-19 and leading the response to infectious diseases; (2) promoting human security and demonstrating leadership in addressing global issues; (3) collaborating with like-minded ally and partners in defending universal values in the international community; (4) cementing understanding and trust in Japan using an array of diplomatic tools; and (5) further strengthening the foreign policy and consular service implementation structure by promoting digitalization. The budget included appropriations for leading the response

to infectious diseases, including COVID-19, and for demonstrating leadership in addressing global issues, such as climate change. Furthermore, MOFA appropriated a budget for realizing FOIP, including strengthening collaboration with like-minded allies and partners and strategically using ODA in order to defend universal values, such as fundamental human rights. Additionally, MOFA appropriated a budget for strengthening the foreign policy and consular service implementation structure, including enhancing strategic communications and promoting digitalization.

In order to promote Japan's national interests, Japan will continue to proceed strategically to develop the foreign policy implementation structure and enhance it further, while making efforts to streamline operations.

### 3 Role of Experts in Diplomacy

In the drastically changing world of recent years, free discussions on foreign policies among experts from the private sector, apart from the official view of each country, have an impact on the international public opinion as well as policy making of the governments.

The leading platforms for such policy discussions include: the World Economic Forum (Davos Forum), which has had a major influence on the trade policies of each country; the Shangri-La Dialogue, where prominent experts and ministers of the world discuss Asian security issues; the Munich Security Conference, which is a forum for a broad-ranging discussion of regional and global security issues, not limited to Europe alone; and the Manama Dialogue, which deals with the security issues in the Middle East. While the COVID-19 outbreak continues to present challenges for in-person meetings, the use of online technology has also enabled experts around the world to participate in meetings more easily. In Japan, it is becoming increasingly important to develop think tanks, researchers and others capable of participating in such major conferences

and contributing to shaping international public opinion. Furthermore, Japanese think tanks are increasingly expected to host international meetings comparable to the aforementioned major conferences.

Against this backdrop, MOFA provides subsidies to support Japanese think tanks' foreign policy and security activities, in order to strengthen their abilities in collecting, analyzing and disseminating information as well as making policy proposals, and to promote participatory diplomacy that brings together all of Japan's resources and engages everyone. In addition, MOFA launched a new subsidy scheme in FY2017 that aims at supporting research and information dissemination of Japanese think tanks in the areas of territory, sovereignty and history. Under the scheme, the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA)<sup>1</sup> conducts such activities as collection, organization

and public release of materials found in Japan and overseas as well as convention of open symposiums in Japan and in other countries. In 2021, as a part of the outcome, JIIA launched a 3D contents exhibition that allows visitors to learn about the nature of the Senkaku Islands at the National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty and other venues. Furthermore, in order to raise public awareness regarding the Takeshima issue and promote a correct understanding by the international community, JIIA held a webinar and other events to explain the flaws with the argument of the Republic of Korea, based on its old maps and archival materials. It is expected that the scheme will support Japanese think tanks in accumulating historical records and knowledge pertaining to Japan's territory, sovereignty and history, and enhancing their information dissemination domestically and abroad.

<sup>1</sup> The relevant section of the Japan Institute of International Affairs' website can be found here: <https://www.jiia-jic.jp/en/>



## Executive Chefs for Ambassadors/ Consuls-General of Japan: At the Forefront of Diplomacy

Executive Chefs for ambassadors/consuls-general of Japan are licensed cooks or persons with a considerable experience working as chefs, who have been recognized by the Minister for Foreign Affairs to engage in official catering work at official residences and other venues for the head of a diplomatic mission overseas (ambassador/consul-general). Diplomatic missions overseas are the center for diplomatic activities such as negotiations with governments, information gathering, and the development of personal networks. One of the most effective means of diplomacy is to create opportunities for meals at the official residence of the ambassador/consul-general, with guests such as influential politicians, businessmen and government officials from the country of assignment, as well as the diplomatic corps from various countries. For this reason, the head of the diplomatic mission is usually accompanied by the Executive Chef for the ambassador/consul-general, an exclusively appointed chef whose aim is to provide high-quality meals.

### ■Aiming for greater heights with “Dubai and Washoku, Japan’s traditional food”

Sameshima Naoto, Executive Chef, Consul-General of Japan in Dubai

My name is Sameshima Naoto and I work as the executive chef at the Consulate-General of Japan in Dubai. I took up the position of executive chef in Dubai in September 2020 at the recommendation of a close friend of 30 years who has been working at MOFA. In my own case, as this was my first experience of being overseas, including going on holiday, and considering the impact of the spread of COVID-19, I was a little anxious initially. However, thanks in part to Dubai’s good living environment, I am able to devote myself to my work.

My main job activity is preparing meals for guests at the official residence and the food served at stand-up buffet receptions.

The first thing that surprised me upon taking up my position in Dubai was that I am able to access many more ingredients than I had imagined. Because Dubai is a global aviation hub, ingredients that are difficult to obtain locally can be sourced by having them airfreighted from Japan, and furthermore there are stores in Dubai that specialize in handling Japanese ingredients. Seasonings such as soy sauce and rice vinegar are even available at local supermarkets. However, I also had close calls in which ingredients I planned to use on the day of a meal failed to arrive due to distribution problems, and I had to hurriedly come up with an alternative menu using the ingredients I had on hand.

The biggest difference with Japan is that Dubai is part of the Islamic world. Consequently, the selling of alcoholic beverages is limited to very few liquor stores. It is difficult to obtain cooking sake and mirin, and when inviting Muslim guests to



In front of the official residence



Sashimi made using Hamour obtained at a fish market in Dubai (The Hamour is shown on the right side of the plate. In Japan this variety of fish is known as Hitomihata.)



Seabream cooked in a salt crust

meals, it is only possible to use food that has been processed using a special procedure known as Halal, and to employ seasonings that do not contain alcohol or extracts derived from pork. The dishes are thus prepared while exercising ingenuity in response to what the situation demands. For example, when making simmered Japanese dishes that require cooking sake, I use a mirin-style seasoning as a substitute and adjust the flavors by using less sugar than usual.

I also noticed that in Dubai even vegetables that are the same as those found in Japan have different qualities as a result of the environment in which they are grown. From November until the end of March, Dubai's climate resembles early summer in Japan, but the temperatures climb from around April, and from August to September, the temperatures repeatedly rise above 40 degrees celsius during the day and exceed 35 degrees celsius even at night. On the other hand, almost no rain falls throughout the year. Thanks to this climatic environment, Dubai produces what are generally referred to as summer vegetables in Japan, such as capsicums, tomatoes and eggplants, that are available throughout the year in supermarkets. Nevertheless, many of these local vegetables have tough skins that are impossible to chew, or consist mainly of seeds, so I pay attention to these factors when sourcing ingredients locally.

When making preparation for meals or receptions, the thing I keep in mind the most is conveying the deliciousness of Japanese ingredients to guests. Taking fish in particular, even if the same kind of fish that are available in Japan were being sold locally, the "flavor and deliciousness" of the fish itself would likely feel different compared to the fish in Japan. As a result, there is always a process of trial and error involved in trying to convey Japan's strengths by having guests savor the "deliciousness" of Japan-raised fish delivered directly from Japan.

Although we are still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, every time I have the opportunity to serve dishes as an executive chef, I always approach it with a "spirit of challenge" and a sense of responsibility, and I try to make each day a day of personal growth.



Serving seabream cooked in a salt crust at a New Year networking meeting

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs accepts applications at any time from candidates who wish to serve in diplomacy as Executive Chefs for ambassadors/consuls-general of Japan. If you are interested, please inquire through the following website or the QR code.

[The International Hospitality and Conference Service Association (IHCSA)  
<http://www.ihcsa.or.jp/zaigaikoukan/cook-1/>]



You can also read more about the activities of Executive Chefs for ambassadors/consuls-general of Japan through the "MOFA Japan Chef" social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter).

Facebook:  
<https://www.facebook.com/MofaJapanChef>

Twitter  
[https://twitter.com/mofa\\_japan\\_chef](https://twitter.com/mofa_japan_chef)



## “Creating” overseas establishments such as embassies and consulates

- The work of technical officials of the building and repair section

Were you aware that there are roles at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that do not involve diplomacy, known as “technical officials?” As the “face of Japan,” overseas establishments such as Japanese embassies abroad provide the bases and settings for Japan’s diplomatic activities, and they serve as the last strongholds for protecting Japanese nationals during emergencies. Technical officials manage, design, construct, operate and maintain these facilities. It can be said that they support diplomatic activities behind the scenes, while partly shouldering the huge responsibility of protecting the lives of Japanese nationals. Here, we feature Kaneko Shinya, a technical official of the building and repair section, who is responsible for construction, maintenance and repair duties overseas, who describes the work that technical officials do.

### ■Lengthy duty overseas

I had wanted to work overseas since my student days, and it was this desire that led me to join MOFA. Out of my 13 years of continuous service, I have spent nine years abroad. The countries I have been posted to thus far – the United States, Iran, Qatar and Thailand – have completely different histories and cultures, yet I have irreplaceable memories from each assignment. I undertook a broad range of duties at the construction sites of the projects in each country, including applying for building permits, managing schedules, checking a variety of construction blueprints, doing quality inspections, selecting equipment, procedures for importing materials, and negotiating with companies in order to ensure connection to public infrastructure. In order to carry out the duties, not only the knowledge of the field of electricity, which is my specialty, but also expertise in fields such as construction and machinery are required. However, I initially lacked both technical knowledge and experience and was unable to even read the construction blueprints correctly, which led to some frustrating moments. Nonetheless, I gradually learned and acquired knowledge from the veteran technicians, who were my supervisors or seniors, which empowered me to continue working hard until today.



Chatting with an official of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Qatar at the groundbreaking ceremony

### ■The path to completing an embassy

When I was posted to Qatar, I was in charge of the construction of the embassy offices. Given that the temperature in Qatar often exceeds 40 degrees Celsius during the day, we exercised ingenuity from the design stage in order to make the indoor environment comfortable under the severe climatic conditions, including by configuring the windows to shield the offices from direct sunlight. Once the project got underway, proceeding with the construction work under the severe environment emerged as a challenge. The concrete work in particular posed the greatest difficulty. The work had to be carried out during the night when the temperature dropped, which led to some difficult experiences unimaginable in Japan, such as carrying out quality tests and other confirmation work for all concrete mixer trucks throughout the night.

After overcoming numerous challenges during construction, the building was at last completed. Nevertheless, immediately after the completion of construction, a series of problems surfaced in one form or another, leaving me with no time to rest. However, once the initial glitches were resolved, I was able to share my delight at completing the project with the construction workers and embassy staff who had been involved in it. Furthermore, once the building began being used, I felt that all my laborious work paid off when I saw the sight of the embassy staff working cheerfully within the new building’s bright spaces.



The new Embassy of Japan in the State of Qatar



A briefing session with construction workers at the construction site

### ■The significance of the work of “creating” embassy and consulate buildings

Being in charge of constructing embassies and consulates overseas is by no means an easy job. Nevertheless, when working alongside locals in a country that has a different architectural culture, history and practices, the joy that I felt upon completing a building that would continue to be a symbol of Japan in that country for coming generations is an unforgettable experience. Furthermore, my job allows me to express a connection between Japan and the country of posting in the form of a building I created with my own hands, and this is one of the joys that is unique to our work. From here on, I am looking forward to engaging in construction projects in countries I have not seen before and linking that work to my own personal growth. I also hope to experience the thrill of “creating a building” that overshadows many hardships that “construction” entails.