

DIPLOMATIC BLUEBOOK 2024

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan

Diplomatic Bluebook 2024

Japanese Diplomacy and
International Situation in 2023

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan

Preface to the Diplomatic Bluebook 2024

Since assuming the office of Minister for Foreign Affairs in September 2023, I have carried out G7 Presidency activities and been confronting the severe international situation, including in Ukraine and the Middle East. Every day I am reminded that the world now stands at a turning point in history. Meanwhile, I am aware that the international community places firm trust and expectations in the Japanese diplomacy woven by our predecessors.

The international order that our predecessors built through hard work is facing serious challenges due to Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine. Unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force also continue in the periphery of Japan. Furthermore, while the growing presence of developing and emerging countries, known as the Global South, has made the international community more diverse, there are still many issues that need to be addressed beyond borders and values. In addition to global challenges including climate change and infectious diseases, economic security issues such as vulnerability of supply chains, economic coercion, and intellectual property theft, as well as cybersecurity and exploitation of emerging technologies such as the spread of disinformation, are posing challenges to global peace and stability.

Building on the outcomes achieved as the G7 Presidency, Japan will work to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law so that all people can enjoy peace, stability, and prosperity. We will pursue diplomacy to realize the safe and secure world where "human dignity" is protected, based on the principle of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): "Leave no one behind." In particular, we will focus on supporting people who are prone to be in vulnerable positions in conflicts and disasters, including "Women, Peace, and Security (WPS)."

As Foreign Minister, I will conduct diplomacy based on the basic policies of firmly protecting Japan's national interests, enhancing Japan's presence in the world, and listening to the voices of the people and conducting diplomacy that is understood and supported by the people.

The Diplomatic Bluebook 2024 primarily presents an overview of the international situation and Japanese diplomatic initiatives in 2023. It begins with an Opening Special Feature looking back on the role Japan played as the G7 Presidency for the past year in leading the world toward cooperation and peace, not division and confrontation. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the recent international situation, the major issues that emerged in the past year, and the corresponding outlook for Japan's diplomacy. Following this summary of the Diplomatic Bluebook, Chapter 2 and the following Chapters describe Japan's diplomatic efforts over the past year under the titles of: "Resilient and Unwavering Regional Diplomacy"; "Diplomacy to Defend National Interests through Co-creation with the World"; and "Japan's Diplomacy Open to the Public."

I hope this Diplomatic Bluebook will deepen the understanding of readers at home and abroad about how Japan carries out diplomacy by steadfastly protecting Japan's national interests in a rapidly changing international situation, while addressing issues facing the international community with both strength and resiliency.

Minister for Foreign Affairs
KAMIKAWA Yoko



In principle, Diplomatic Bluebook 2024 describes an overview of the international affairs and Japan's diplomatic activities from January 1 to December 31 of 2023; however, some important events that occurred until early 2024 are also included.

Chapters 1 to 4 offer overviews of Japan's diplomatic activities throughout 2023 in a concise and easy-to-understand manner, and also include special features delving into specific foreign policy themes and column articles, including contributions from people with global experiences.

This year's and past years' Diplomatic Bluebooks are available on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Summaries of Diplomatic Bluebook 2024 in French and Spanish are also due to be available on the website by autumn 2024.

For more details with respect to Chapter 3, Section 2, "Japan's International Cooperation," please refer to MOFA's publication, *White Paper on Development Cooperation - Japan's International Cooperation*. It is also available on the MOFA website.

Please note that the titles of persons and names of countries appearing in this book are those as of the events. Website links and 2D codes in this book are those as of publication and may be changed or deleted later. The contents and views expressed in contributions from individuals and organizations do not reflect the position of MOFA. The maps in this book are simplified and may not necessarily be drawn to scale or reflect other details precisely.

Previous Diplomatic Bluebooks:

<https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/index.html>



White Paper on Development Cooperation - Japan's International Cooperation:

https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/page_000017.html



Opening Special Feature

G7 Hiroshima Summit 2023: From Hiroshima to the World **-Toward a World Characterized by Cooperation and Peace, Not Division and Confrontation-**

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Opening Special Feature

Chapter 1

Opening Special Feature

G7 Hiroshima Summit 2023: From Hiroshima to the World
-Toward a World Characterized by Cooperation and Peace, Not Division and
Confrontation-

002

Chapter 1

**Overview of the International Situation and Outlook for
Japan's Diplomacy**
Message to the World at a Turning Point in History - Human Dignity

014



Opening Special Feature

G7 Hiroshima Summit 2023

From Hiroshima to the World

-Toward a World Characterized by Cooperation and Peace,
Not Division and Confrontation-



Session 1 of the G7 Hiroshima Summit (May 19, Hiroshima Prefecture)

The G7¹ shares the fundamental values and principles of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and has jointly demonstrated leadership in addressing issues faced by the international community. As the holder of the G7 Presidency, Japan held the G7 Hiroshima Summit² in Hiroshima Prefecture from May 19 to 21. Japan led the discussions among the leaders at the Summit and demonstrated proactive initiatives to steadily implement the outcomes of the Summit and address further challenges.



▲ Group photo (G7 leaders, invited country leaders, heads of international organizations) (May 20, Hiroshima Prefecture)



▶ G7 Leaders after they offered flowers to the Cenotaph for the Atomic Bomb Victims (May 19, Hiroshima Prefecture)

1 G7 Hiroshima Summit (May)

(1) Overview

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, under the broad theme of realizing an international community characterized by cooperation, not division and confrontation, the G7 demonstrated active and concrete contributions with the two pillars of upholding the free and open international order based on the rule of law and strengthening outreach with international partners beyond the G7. The Indo-Pacific was also an important theme throughout the various topics of discussion.

G7 leaders, together with invited countries and organizations, discussed a variety of issues facing

the international community, including food, development, health, climate change and energy, and the environment, and affirmed the importance of cooperating with developing and emerging countries in the so-called the Global South to address these issues. In addition, the leaders of G7, invited countries, and Ukraine discussed global peace and stability, and shared recognition of the importance of the principles of the United Nations (UN) Charter, including the rule of law as well as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

¹ The G7 is a framework with participation by seven countries (France, the United States (U.S.), the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, Japan, Italy, Canada (in order of presidency)), and the European Union (EU). G7 meetings are sometimes attended by invited countries and international organizations other than G7 members. The G7 Hiroshima Summit was attended by Australia, Brazil, Comoros (Chair country of the African Union (AU)), Cook Islands (Chair country of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)), India (G20 Presidency), Indonesia (ASEAN Chairmanship), the Republic of Korea (ROK), Viet Nam, the United Nations (UN), International Energy Agency (IEA), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO) (online participation), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). (*In addition, Ukraine participated in some sessions.)

² G7 Hiroshima Summit homepage: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/summit/hiroshima23/en/>





(2) Outcomes and Follow-up Status of Major Fields

(A) Situation in Ukraine

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, G7 leaders confirmed that they would continue to impose severe sanctions against Russia and provide strong support for Ukraine, and issued the G7 Leaders' Statement on Ukraine. In addition, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy participated in-person in relevant sessions and met with Prime Minister Kishida and other leaders.

At the G7 Leaders' Video Conference on December 6, which was also attended by President Zelenskyy in the beginning, Prime Minister Kishida stressed that the G7 remained committed to leading the international community's response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, even as the situation in the Middle East grew increasingly tense. He also demonstrated the G7's determination to unite and continue to strongly promote sanctions against Russia and support for Ukraine, in order to achieve a just and lasting peace.

(B) Indo-Pacific

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, Prime Minister Kishida explained Japan's New Plan for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)"³ and stated that the G7 would strengthen cooperation with the Indo-Pacific region, including ASEAN countries and Pacific Island countries. G7 leaders confirmed that they would continue



Session 9 of the G7 Hiroshima Summit, "Toward a Peaceful, Stable and Prosperous World" (May 21, Hiroshima Prefecture; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)



Group photo with President Zelenskyy of Ukraine during Session 8 "Ukraine" of the G7 Hiroshima Summit (May 21, Hiroshima Prefecture; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)



Prime Minister Kishida speaks at the G7 Leaders' Video Conference (December 6, Tokyo; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

to closely cooperate in addressing issues concerning China and also responding to North Korea, including the nuclear and missile issues and the abductions issue.

(C) Disarmament and Non-Proliferation

The G7 Summit was held in Hiroshima, which was devastated by atomic bombing and is now a symbol of the pledge for peace. The Summit had historic significance in confirming the commitment of G7 leaders and others to realize a world without nuclear weapons. The leaders of the G7 learned firsthand the reality of the atomic bombing and solemnly shared a moment to sense, and planted a tree to show to the world their strong determination for the future to ensure that the catastrophes of nuclear weapons will never occur again. In addition to G7 leaders, the leaders of the invited



Prime Minister Kishida and President Zelenskyy of Ukraine offer flowers at Peace Memorial Park (May 21, Hiroshima Prefecture)

countries and heads of international organizations shared a time of solemn remembrance by having a first-hand look at the reality of the atomic bombing and the thoughts of people who wish for peace through offering flowers at the Peace Memorial Park, visiting the Peace Memorial Museum, and listening to the voices of atomic bombing survivors. This is reflected in the messages that the leaders wrote in the guest book.

G7 leaders reaffirmed their commitment to a world without nuclear weapons, issued the “G7 Leaders’ Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament,” the first stand-alone G7 leaders’ document on nuclear disarmament, and once again strengthened the momentum of the international community toward a world without nuclear weapons.



Message in the Peace Memorial Museum guest book written by President Joseph Biden of the United States

“May the stories of this Museum remind us all of our obligations to build a future of peace. Together-let us continue to make progress toward the day when we can finally and forever rid the world of nuclear weapons. Keep the faith!”

*See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website for leader’s message:
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/summit/hiroshima23/en/topics/detail014/>



3 On March 20, Prime Minister Kishida delivered a policy speech entitled “The Future of the Indo-Pacific—Japan’s New Plan for a ‘Free and Open Indo-Pacific’ — ‘Together with India, as an Indispensable Partner.’” In it, he announced the New Plan for FOIP, which launches the four pillars of cooperation for FOIP: “Principles for Peace and Rules for Prosperity,” “Addressing Challenges in an Indo-Pacific Way,” “Multi-layered Connectivity,” and “Extending Efforts for Security and Safe Use of the Sea to the Air.”



G7 leaders writing in the guest book after visiting the Peace Memorial Museum (May 19, Hiroshima Prefecture)



Group photo with leaders of invited countries and heads of international organizations who visited Peace Memorial Park (May 21, Hiroshima Prefecture)

(D) Food Security

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, G7 leaders committed to continuing their efforts to improve global food security, taking into account the negative impacts of Russia's aggression against Ukraine on global food security. The leaders of the G7 and invited countries also jointly issued the Hiroshima Action Statement for Resilient Global Food Security. They shared the importance of working closely together to respond to the food security crisis outlined in the statement and to take medium- to long-term actions with partner countries to build resilient, sustainable, and inclusive agriculture and food systems, and called for broader cooperation within the international community.

Based on the statement, Japan co-hosted the Dialogue on the Food Security Crisis between Food Exporting Countries and Importing Countries with the International Grains Council in London in the United Kingdom (UK) in June. The outcome document of the discussion was announced at a high-level event co-hosted by Japan, Italy, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) during the UN General Assembly High-Level Week in September.

(E) Economic Resilience and Economic Security

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, a standalone session on economic security was held for the first time at a G7 Summit. During the session, G7 leaders affirmed

that the G7 would be united in responding to issues such as (1) enhancing resilience of supply chain and critical infrastructure, (2) strengthening its response to non-market policies and practices and economic coercion, and (3) appropriately managing critical and emerging technologies. In addition, based on the recognition that economic security is a strategic challenge that the G7 should closely cooperate and tackle, G7 leaders confirmed their will to closely coordinate in a holistic manner through the G7 framework. In particular, with regard to economic coercion, G7 leaders confirmed the launch of the Coordination Platform on Economic Coercion. As the first comprehensive and concrete message on economic resilience and economic security as the G7, G7 leaders issued the G7 Leaders' Statement on Economic Resilience and Economic Security. Furthermore, the leaders issued the "G7 Clean Energy Economic Action Plan" on supply chain resilience for the clean energy transition.

Based on these outcomes, at the G7 Trade Ministers' Meeting in Osaka-Sakai on October 28 and 29, the participants concurred to make further progress on economic coercion as the G7, and also concurred on the need to strengthen cooperation with the wider international community and engagement with the private sector for supply chain resilience.

In addition, during the G7 Leaders' Video Conference on December 6, Prime Minister Kishida called for stronger cooperation among the G7 in this area in the future, pointing out the need to strengthen cooperation in addressing non-market policies and

practices and economic coercion, strengthening supply chains and key infrastructure, and managing sensitive technologies, and noting that the discussions at the G7 Hiroshima Summit and the G7 Leaders' Statement on Economic Resilience and Economic Security are the foundation for that.

(F) Climate and Energy

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, G7 leaders confirmed that the G7, Pacific Island countries, African countries, and countries of other region need to work together on climate change, which is an urgent issue that is common to all humanity and should be called the “climate crisis.” The leaders also called on all major economies to peak global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2025 in order to achieve the 1.5°C target⁴ for limiting temperature rise. The participants also affirmed their common understanding of the importance of pursuing the common goal of net zero emissions under various pathways that utilize

all technologies and energy sources according to each country's situation, so as not to impede economic growth, while maximizing the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency while holistically addressing energy security, the climate crisis, and geopolitical risks. They also confirmed the importance of mobilizing climate finance and the need to support countries and peoples vulnerable to climate change.

Furthermore, G7 leaders called on the International Energy Agency (IEA) to (1) make recommendations on options on how to diversify supplies of energy and critical minerals as well as clean energy manufacturing, (2) develop a clean energy manufacturing roadmap, and (3) convene an international forum with relevant parties from the public sector, finance, corporate, research and start-ups. In response to this request, a recommendation on how to diversify the supply of energy and critical minerals as well as clean energy manufacturing was released by the IEA in December.



Prime Minister Kishida attends Session 5 “Economic Resilience and Economic Security” of the G7 Hiroshima Summit (May 20, Hiroshima Prefecture)

⁴ This goal was set through the Paris Agreement, aiming to limit the global average temperature increase to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and continue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

(G) Environment

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, G7 leaders welcomed the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), a new framework for biodiversity conservation, and committed to its swift and full implementation and achievement of each of its goals and targets. G7 Leaders also confirmed their commitment to end plastic pollution with the ambition to reduce additional plastic pollution to zero by 2040.

(H) Global Health

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, Prime Minister Kishida called for addressing global health challenges, including preparing for the next crisis after the COVID-19. G7 leaders confirmed their commitment to improve global health governance, further promote funding initiatives, and strengthen international norms in order to develop and strengthen the global health architecture (GHA) for enhanced prevention, preparedness, and response (PPR) to public health crises. In addition, to contribute to the achievement of more resilient, equitable, and sustainable universal health coverage (UHC),⁵ the G7 pledged to contribute more than 48 billion U.S. dollars from both the public and private sectors, and Japan expressed

its intention to contribute 7.5 billion U.S. dollars between 2022 and 2025. Furthermore, with regard to the promotion of health innovation, which is key to strengthening GHA and achieving UHC, the G7 announced “the G7 Hiroshima Vision for Equitable Access to Medical Countermeasures (MCMs),” which outlines basic ideas and principles for ensuring equitable access to MCMs, and launched “the MCM Delivery Partnership for equitable access (MCDP).”⁶ In addition, during the UN General Assembly in September, Prime Minister Kishida attended the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on UHC and Foreign Minister Kamikawa attended the UN High-Level Meeting on Pandemic PPR. Japan also hosted the G7 Health Follow-up Side Event, and reaffirmed its commitment to achieve UHC and strengthen PPR with the G7, relevant countries, international organizations, and others.

(I) Gender

Throughout the year of its G7 Presidency, Japan stressed the importance of integrating policies on various issues to promote gender mainstreaming, and at the relevant G7 ministerial meetings, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity were discussed. The “nexus approach” was advocated to further advance gender mainstreaming into various policy areas, which was clearly stated in the G7 Hiroshima Leaders’ Communiqué. The nexus approach emphasizes organic linkages among policies. The concept is that it is important to jointly cooperate and coordinate policies and work together in an integrated manner, so that synergistic effects can be generated, and progress can be expected toward the achievement of gender equality.

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, Prime Minister Kishida emphasized the importance of creating a “nexus” to promote gender mainstreaming, and stated that various initiatives will be organically coordinated, using as examples the promotion of the Women, Peace



Prime Minister Kishida attends the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on UHC (September 21, New York, U.S.; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

⁵ Universal Health Coverage (UHC): All people can receive basic health services when they need them at an affordable cost without financial hardship.

⁶ MCM Delivery Partnership for equitable access (MCDP): A framework for international cooperation focusing on MCM delivery to ensure equitable access to MCMs as a countermeasure in the event of infectious disease crises.



Example of Japanese support project to promote WPS:
Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection (Women LEAP) Center in Bidibidi refugee community (August 25, 2021, Uganda)

and Security (WPS)⁷ Agenda, including its application to disaster risk reduction, as well as women's economic independence. The participating countries and organizations expressed their agreement.

(J) Development

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, G7 leaders confirmed that they would promote efforts for effective utilization of development cooperation and mobilization of private-sector funds, taking into account that 2023 was the midpoint year toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In addition, during the G7 Hiroshima Summit, Japan also hosted a side event on the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), inviting the private sector for the first time. At the event, the G7 expressed its commitment to mobilizing private sector capital for infrastructure investment in partner

countries in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders. Prime Minister Kishida introduced the PGII initiatives and Japan's efforts under the partnership



Side-event on the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (May 20, Hiroshima Prefecture)

⁷ Women, peace, and security (WPS): An approach in which amidst protecting women, women themselves can help move closer to a more sustainable peace by taking leadership positions and participating in conflict prevention, reconstruction, and peacebuilding. In 2000, for the first time in its history, the UN Security Council passed Security Council resolution 1325 on WPS, which clearly states that international peace and conflict prevention and resolution require the equal participation of women, protection against sexual violence during conflicts, and gender equality.



Example of Japan's PGII initiatives: Construction site of the Matarbari port development project (Matarbari, Bangladesh; Photo: Coal Power Generation Company Bangladesh Limited)



Example of Japan's PGII initiatives: Construction site for the Delhi rapid transport system construction plan (Delhi, India; Photo: Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Limited)

and stated that Japan has been promoting infrastructure investment around the world, including in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific, to mobilize more than 65 billion U.S. dollars in infrastructure assistance and private capital over the next five years, and that Japan will work to further promote investment in high quality infrastructure.

(K) Digital and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, G7 leaders affirmed the need for governance on generative AI and immersive technologies (such as the metaverse) in line with G7 values and launched the Hiroshima AI Process for discussion on generative AI. G7 leaders also endorsed the establishment of the Institutional Arrangement for Partnership (IAP) for operationalising Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT).

Through the Hiroshima AI Process, the Hiroshima AI Process Comprehensive Policy Framework,

including the Hiroshima Process International Guiding Principles for All AI Actors and the Hiroshima Process International Code of Conduct for Organizations Developing Advanced AI Systems, was agreed at the G7 Digital and Tech Ministers' Meeting on December 1, and then endorsed at the G7 Leaders' Video Conference on December 6. This was a landmark achievement that comprehensively set out the rules on AI to be followed by the relevant actors for the first time globally, and clearly demonstrated to the world that the G7 responded effectively and quickly to the governance of rapidly evolving generative AI.

At the same G7 Digital and Tech Ministers' Meeting, ministers adopted the G7 Digital and Tech Ministers' Statement on Operationalisation of Data Free Flow with Trust and an annex outlining the organization details of the IAP, and affirmed the progress of efforts related to the IAP.

(L) Trade

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, the G7 concurred on the need to work on maintaining and strengthening the free and fair trading system.

At the G7 Trade Ministers' Meeting held on October 28 and 29, there was close discussion on the sustainable growth of the global economy, the maintenance and strengthening of the free and fair multilateral trading system, and the enhancement of economic security amidst the drastically changing environment surrounding trade. While policy coordination was made among the ministers by discussing G7 responses to new challenges facing the international community, they reaffirmed to cooperate with international partners beyond the G7 as discussions were also held with invited non-G7 countries and international organizations.



Group photo at the G7 Trade Ministers' Meeting in Osaka-Sakai (October 28, Sakai, Osaka Prefecture)



Prime Minister Kishida engages in discussion during Session 1 (working lunch) of the G7 Hiroshima Summit (May 19, Hiroshima Prefecture)

2 G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting

(1) G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Karuizawa, Nagano (April)

At the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held in Karuizawa, Nagano from April 16 to 18, the G7 foreign ministers held frank and in-depth discussions, and the G7 Foreign Ministers' Communiqué was issued as the outcome of the meeting.

Throughout the sessions, the G7 foreign ministers confirmed to continue coordinating closely to the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, and also discussed nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, bearing in mind that the Summit would be held in Hiroshima. In addition,

taking into account the fact that the meeting was held in Japan, the only G7 member in Asia, there were substantial discussions on the Indo-Pacific region, including China, North Korea, ASEAN, and Pacific Island countries.

As a result of the meeting, the G7 confirmed for the first time in writing its commitment to the free and open international order based on the rule of law, which Japan places importance on, and its strong opposition to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion anywhere in the world.



Foreign Minister Hayashi chairs the "Indo-Pacific" session (April 17, Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture)



Working Dinner on the Indo-Pacific (April 16, Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture)



Commemorative photo of the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting (April 17, Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture)

(2) G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting (November)

At the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Tokyo on November 7 and 8, the G7 foreign ministers had frank and in-depth discussions, particularly on the situation in Israel and Palestine. As chair of the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Foreign Minister Kamikawa contributed to the coordination of the discussions and the issuance of a comprehensive message in the form of a Foreign Ministers' Statement.

Regarding the situation in Ukraine, the G7 confirmed that it would remain united in its attitude to impose severe sanctions against Russia and provide strong support for Ukraine, even in today's international situation, and also discussed the Indo-Pacific region, which is of utmost strategic importance. In addition, for the first time at a G7 foreign ministers' meeting, there was a dialogue with five Central Asian countries, which provided an opportunity to discuss areas of cooperation between the Central Asian countries and the G7.

Furthermore, wide-ranging discussions were held on cooperation with international partners, one of the priorities under the Japanese Presidency this

year. The G7 Foreign Ministers commit to further building international solidarity beyond the G7 to address maintaining and strengthening the free and open international order based on the rule of law, and broader global challenges, such as climate change, nuclear disarmament, and gender equality including the Women, Peace and Security agenda (WPS).



Foreign Minister Kamikawa chairs the Working Dinner on the Middle East (November 7, Iikura Guest House, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo)



Group photo at the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting (November 8, Iikura Guest House, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo)



Overview of the International Situation and Outlook for Japan's Diplomacy

Message to the World at a Turning Point in History - Human Dignity

In order for Japan to ensure its national interests in the diplomatic, security, and economic domains, to prevent crises, and to secure the safety and prosperity of the lives of its citizens, including Japanese nationals living abroad, it is necessary to maintain and develop an international order based on universal values and principles such as freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, as well as to proactively create a peaceful and stable international environment. To this end, Japan needs to advance its foreign policy strategically and flexibly, while grasping trends in international affairs with a clear view and adapting to changes. This chapter outlines a broad overview of the international situation surrounding Japan and the outlook for Japan's diplomacy.

1 Overview of the International Situation

Looking at the international situation since the end of the Cold War, the international community is currently at a major turning point in history once again. For some time since the end of the Cold War, a stable international order has expanded throughout the world. Advanced democracies, including the overwhelmingly powerful United States (U.S.) and Japan, took the lead in maintaining and developing an international order based on values and principles such as freedom, democracy, respect for fundamental human rights, and the rule of law. A trend toward international cooperation to enhance fairness, transparency, and predictability of international relations grew stronger. Furthermore, on the premise of such an international order, economic globalization and interdependence have advanced, bringing a certain degree of stability and economic growth to the international community, including developing countries.

Although globalization has reduced the overall disparities among nations, some countries, such as Least

Developed Countries (LDC), have not been able to fully enjoy its benefits. On the other hand, in some developed countries, domestic disparities have rather widened, which has led to political and social tensions and divisions, destabilizing democratic political systems. Furthermore, the rise of emerging and developing countries that developed under the international order described above has led to the diversification of the international community in recent years. Some of these countries, also known as the Global South, are aware of this shift and are seeking greater influence and a stronger voice commensurate with their national power.

In addition, some states are strengthening their military power in a rapid and non-transparent manner, and are becoming more assertive and challenging the existing international order based on their own historical views. There also exists a tendency to “weaponize” economic dependencies to achieve their own political goals. On the other hand, the scope of security has expanded to fields such as ensuring resilience of supply chains for semiconductors and critical minerals, promotion and protection of critical and emerging technologies, cybersecurity, and countering disinformation. Against the backdrop of these changes in the power balance and security environment, competition among nations has become more intense and complex.

Turning to the entire international community, global issues such as climate change, the environment, infectious diseases, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and terrorism and transnational organized crime remain extremely important. In recent years, informatization and digitization have made these issues more visible and widely recognized throughout the world, but these issues cannot be solved by any one major power alone, and cooperation within the international community is needed more than ever. In addition, economic globalization and interdependence, which have advanced in the post-Cold War

world, persistently remain in the era of competition among nations, in which complete decoupling is not possible. These developments show the complexity of the international relations where confrontation, competition, and cooperation are intricately intertwined.

Against this backdrop, Russia launched its aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, shaking the very foundation of the international order that had supported peace, stability, and prosperity in the post-Cold War era. Furthermore, in October 2023, the situation surrounding Israel and Palestine has worsened after the terror attacks against Israel by Hamas and others, making the axis of confrontation in the international community more complex. It is difficult to say that the United Nations (UN) is adequately fulfilling the expected functions in face of the crises to which the international community urgently needs to respond, including serious humanitarian crises due to the continuation of conflicts. It is said that some countries, including those in the Global South, have accumulated distrust toward the existing global governance¹ system.

With international relations complexly intertwined today, conflicts in the two regions of Europe and the Middle East are not only problems in themselves, but have also revealed new threats such as cyberattacks and spread of disinformation, thus hampering international cooperation in solving global issues and affecting the stability and prosperity of all regions of the world, including Japan. Under these circumstances, the international situation will enter a critical phase in 2024, in which important elections are scheduled to be held in various parts of the world, from the perspective that each country's domestic politics and international relations mutually influence one another.

Against this backdrop, the following part explains the major international issues facing the international community.

(1) Challenge to the Free and Open International Order based on the Rule of Law

With conflicts raging in two of the three regions that have been important to global stability in history

— Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia —, the stability of the Indo-Pacific region, including East Asia, is more important than ever.

Russia has been continuing its aggression against Ukraine since February 2022. The act of a permanent member of the UN Security Council blatantly violating the principles of the UN Charter, such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the general prohibition of the use of force, is an outrageous act that shakes the very foundation of the existing international order, which the international community has built up over a long period of hard work and much sacrifice, and the international community must not allow such an act. Furthermore, Russia has repeatedly threatened Ukraine with its use of nuclear weapons, but the international community must firmly reject Russia's threat of use of nuclear weapons, let alone any use of nuclear weapons.

In 2023, at the G7 Hiroshima Summit hosted by Japan, the leaders of the G7, with the participation of Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, affirmed to continue strong support for Ukraine and severe sanctions against Russia, emphasized that peace cannot be achieved without the withdrawal of Russian troops, and confirmed that they would make every effort to bring peace to Ukraine. The G7 leaders also communicated to the international community their determination to uphold and reinforce the free and open international order based on the rule of law, to protect peace and prosperity, and to realize a world without nuclear weapons. Currently, some indicate fatigue in support of Ukraine and others point to a relative decline in interest in the situation in Ukraine, coupled with the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East. However, the achievement of a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, premised on the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops, is essential to upholding the rule of law in the international community.

In today's international community, where international relations are intricately intertwined, Russia's aggression against Ukraine and unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force in East Asia are not geographically separate and distinct issues. The security of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific are inseparable, and

¹ Global Governance: The totality of institutions, policies, norms, procedures, and initiatives that provide predictability, stability, and order in dealing with interstate issues in the international community where there is no higher level of government unlike domestic system.

cooperation with a wide range of like-minded countries, including European countries, the European Union (EU), and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), is important to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

In fact, in East Asia, including the area surrounding Japan, North Korea has been advancing its nuclear and missile development, including the launches of the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM)-class ballistic missiles. In addition, China has been continuing and intensifying its unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, including the waters surrounding the Senkaku Islands, and has continued and intensified a series of military activities around Japan. The security environment surrounding Japan is as severe and complex as it has ever been since the end of World War II. Peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait are also important. At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, the G7 concurred on the importance to convey to China the common concerns of the G7 and call for action as a responsible member of the international community, while working with China on global issues such as climate change, and areas of common interest, and building constructive and stable relations through dialogue.

Against this backdrop, the leaders of Japan and China reaffirmed to comprehensively promote a “Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests” at their summit meeting in November, and confirmed a broad direction of establishing “constructive and stable Japan-China relations.” For ensuring the stability of the Indo-Pacific, cooperation with like-minded countries that share fundamental values, such as Australia, India, the Republic of Korea (ROK), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Pacific Island countries, is also becoming increasingly important.

(2) Challenges Posed to Global Governance by the Shift in the Power Balance

The international community is witnessing a historic shift in the power balance, as many developing

countries have achieved economic development under the stable international order that developed throughout the post-Cold War era. In recent years, the share of developing and emerging economies in the size of the global economy has increased rapidly, with symbolic changes such as India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) overtaking that of the United Kingdom (UK) to become the world's fifth largest in 2023.

Developing and emerging countries, also known as the Global South, are becoming increasingly aware of these changes and tend to have a stronger presence not only in the economic but also in the diplomatic and security spheres. In 2023, the world witnessed moves among the Global South to increase their unity: India, as the G20 Presidency, hosted the “Voice of Global South Summit,” and the expansion of BRICS² membership was announced at the BRICS Summit under the chairmanship of South Africa.

The geopolitical position and economic situation of these countries vary from country to country. While some emerging countries are members of the G20, there are vulnerable countries that are suffering from various challenges, including poverty, conflicts, terrorism and transnational organized crime, natural disaster, and climate change. Each country has diverse interests and agendas. In recent years, this has been revealed particularly over their response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, including their voting attitudes on UN General Assembly resolutions and their reluctance toward sanctions against Russia. It is not appropriate to treat the “Global South” as a single entity, and it is important to engage with each country in a fine-tuned manner, taking into account different needs of each country.

The UN is facing a time of trial as values in the international community become diverse and geopolitical competition between states intensifies. The UN Security Council, which has primary responsibility for peace and security of the international community, has not necessarily been functioning effectively in response to the situation in Ukraine and the Israeli-Palestinian situation due to the exercise of veto by permanent members, and there are growing calls to strengthen

² BRICS: Term used to refer to Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. In this context, at the BRICS Summit in August, BRICS announced the invitation of Argentina, Ethiopia, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates (UAE) to become new members (Argentina withdrew its membership application due to a subsequent change of administration.).

UN functions, including UN Security Council reform. Although the UN General Assembly has made various efforts, some say that the confrontation has become even more complex after the deterioration of the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

While the multilateral frameworks centered on the UN face difficulties, cooperation among allies and like-minded countries such as the G7, Japan-Australia-India-U.S., Japan-U.S.-ROK, is becoming increasingly important. In particular, the G7 has continuously provided broad support for Ukraine and imposed severe sanctions against Russia since the launch of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The G7 Hiroshima Summit also set out strengthening engagement with international partners beyond the G7, including the Global South, and Japan has worked so that its outcomes to be fed into the G20, in which many Global South countries also participate. As it is no longer possible for the international community to converge under a single set of values and principles, Japan needs to take an inclusive approach that overcomes conflict in values and interests and extend a fine-tuned diplomacy to seek cooperation that is truly needed by each country.

(3) Impacts of Economic Globalization and Continuing Interdependence

Despite the above-mentioned situation, the global economic network that developed during the post-Cold War era continues to support growth as the common foundation of the international community, and the global interdependence is further deepening against the background of economic development of emerging countries, technological innovation and increased human exchange.

In particular, food and energy supply shortages have hit the world, particularly the most vulnerable countries, and the vulnerabilities of the global supply chains have been revealed due to COVID-19 and Russia's aggression against Ukraine. In addition, some countries attempt to expand their own interests and power by leveraging economic dependencies and their own large markets as tools for coercion. This shows that in an era when complete decoupling is no longer possible, economic globalization and interdependence can bring not only positive aspects of growth and prosperity, but also security threats. Challenges such as theft

of intellectual property and sensitive technologies, and development finance that ignores other countries' debt sustainability have also been identified, and the scope of security has expanded to include the fields of economy, and critical and emerging technologies.

In light of such demands of today, at the G7 Hiroshima Summit, Japan set up a specific session on economic security for the first time on the agenda of the G7 Summit. During the Summit, the G7 leaders affirmed that the G7 will be united in responding to issues such as enhancing resilience of supply chains and critical infrastructure, strengthening responses to non-market policy and practices and economic coercion, as well as appropriately managing critical and emerging technologies.

In order to counter economic coercion and unfair trade practices and to expand the free and fair international economic order, it is also becoming increasingly important to maintain and strengthen the multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core, and to create new rules adapted to the times. Integrating social and environmental sustainability into the economy is also a need of the times, and it is necessary to address the environment, human rights, and gender equality with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in mind, while aiming for economic growth. In response to these global challenges, there have been calls for reform of Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), including the World Bank, particularly from the countries of the Global South.

(4) New Challenges Posed by Complex Global Issues and Science and Technology

There are a number of global challenges that commonly threaten humanity, including climate change, environmental pollution, international health challenges, including infectious diseases, and poverty. In particular, as extreme weather events and natural disasters, such as heavy rains, floods, droughts, and wildfires, are becoming severe and more frequent in recent years, the impact of climate change is more and more seriously recognized. In addition, Russia's aggression against Ukraine and other factors have created and exacerbated further crises, such as food and energy shortages, a growing

number of refugees, including internally displaced persons, thus creating further humanitarian crisis. In 2023, the international community marked the half-way point to the deadline of achieving SDGs. Nevertheless, international cooperation to achieve SDGs faces major challenges as the international community becomes increasingly divided and confrontational.

As the international community faces complex crises, there is a renewed focus on “human dignity” as the common starting point of humanity, which no one can doubt, that human life and dignity are of paramount importance, in order to lead the world toward cooperation rather than division and confrontation. Furthermore, women and girls in particular have been seriously affected in armed clashes, including in Ukraine and the Middle East. The perspectives of Women, Peace and Security (WPS), the foundational concept that the international community has a better chance to achieve sustained peace by having women actively participate as leaders in conflict resolution, reconstruction and peacebuilding while also protecting and helping women and girls, has renewed emphasis placed on it.

Turning to scientific and technological developments, technological innovations such as the fifth-generation mobile communications systems (5G), the Internet of Things (IoT), quantum technology and others have brought about substantive and irreversible changes in society and daily life, while the development of social media has ushered in an era where geographically distant places are instantly connected through information. Digitalization and information technology have improved the convenience of human life and facilitated cross-border communication, while global issues such as climate change have become more visible. In particular, while Artificial Intelligence (AI), which has developed rapidly in recent years, provides us with the opportunity to transform human society for the better, security risks such as cyberattacks and information manipulation, including the spread of disinformation, have been identified, particularly for advanced AI systems, including generative AI. Such technological advances are also directly linked to

national competitiveness leading to moves to strengthen military power as dual-use military and civilian technology, and democracy itself is being put to the test as the formation of confirmation bias³ through social media has made it more difficult to form public opinion based on correct information and sound debate.

Against this background, at the G7 Hiroshima Summit, the G7 launched the “Hiroshima AI Process” to discuss the international governance of generative AI, and in December agreed on the “Hiroshima AI Process Comprehensive Policy Framework” that comprehensively sets out the rules to be followed by relevant actors for the first time globally. The AI Safety Summit was also held in the UK in November, where discussions were held on international cooperation on AI safety assessment.

That peace and development in the international community now cannot be achieved solely through the development of globalization and interdependence is evident in Russia's protracted aggression against Ukraine and the rapid deterioration of the Israeli-Palestinian situation. At the same time, cross-border international cooperation and the active use of science and technology, and innovation are essential to overcome the common global challenges of humanity. The international community needs to overcome differences in values and interests and promote international cooperation while appropriately addressing the risks posed by technology, with an emphasis on cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society, and youth.

2 Outlook for Japan's Diplomacy

While Russia's aggression against Ukraine is continuing and the existing international order is under serious challenges, the international community is diversifying with the rise of emerging and developing countries, known as the “Global South.” Against this backdrop, multilateralism centered on UN faces even greater difficulties. On the other hand, there are a host of global issues including climate change and new threats such as

³ Confirmation bias: Refers to the tendency, when testing a hypothesis, to have a bias for selecting information that supports the hypothesis from among many pieces of information, and to devalue or ignore information that does not support the hypothesis. (Source: imidas)

cyberattacks and information manipulation, including spread of disinformation, which need to be addressed beyond borders and values, thus calling for cooperation among nations more than ever before.

Japan must seize the tide of major changes in the international community at this turning point in history, to ensure the peace, security, and prosperity of its own country and people and proactively create a peaceful and stable international environment by maintaining and strengthening the international order based on values and principles such as freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. To this end, Japan needs to develop a diplomacy that places the most fundamental value of “human dignity” at its center and leads the world toward cooperation rather than division and confrontation.

Japan has consistently followed the path of a peace-loving nation since the end of World War II, contributing to peace, stability, and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and the international community, and working to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law. It has also developed a fine-tuned diplomacy with all countries, respecting the diversity of each country, discussing common issues from the same perspective, and providing support that is truly needed by the other party. Furthermore, Japan as a flag-bearer of free trade has promoted a rules-based free and fair economic order under a multilateral trading system. At the same time, Japan has cooperated with developing countries based on the principle of human security and addressed global issues, including the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), through capacity building support and other measures. It has also actively contributed to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and international peacebuilding efforts.

The trust and expectations that Japan has gained in the world through these efforts is the cornerstone of Japanese diplomacy today. As the world reaches a turning point in history, Japan will continue to conduct diplomacy based on the following basic policies: (1) firmly protecting Japan’s national interests, (2) enhancing Japan’s presence in the world, (3) listening to the voices of the people, and conducting diplomacy that is understood and supported by the people. Japan itself,

facing the most severe and complex security environment since the end of World War II, will also steadily implement the National Security Strategy to ensure the safety and prosperity of its people’s lives and to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

As critical elections are scheduled to be held in various parts of the world in 2024, international affairs are expected to enter a critical phase, including in Ukraine and the Middle East. Against this backdrop, Japan will host important international meetings such as the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10) and the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) Ministerial Meeting. As this year also marks the “70th anniversary of Japan’s International Cooperation,” Japan will take this opportunity to actively communicate the significance of and prospects for Official Development Assistance (ODA), one of its most important diplomatic tools, to deepen public understanding. Japan works closely with the international community to take the lead in resolving the mounting issues facing the international community.

(1) Maintain and Strengthen a Free and Open International Order based on the Rule of Law

The rule of law is the foundation of peace and prosperity for all nations. Japan will continue to comprehensively pursue a diplomacy based on dialogue and cooperation to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

(a) Promotion of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” based on the Rule of Law

The realization of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” based on the rule of law is one of the top priorities of Japanese diplomacy. In March, Prime Minister Kishida, during his visit to India, delivered a policy speech entitled “the Future of the Indo-Pacific—Japan’s New Plan for a ‘Free and Open Indo-Pacific’ — ‘Together with India, as an Indispensable Partner,’ ” announcing Japan’s new plan for FOIP. In this speech, he clearly stated that Japan will attach great importance on “rulemaking through dialogue,” “equal partnership among nations,” and an approach focusing on “people,” while maintaining the core principles of defending

“freedom” and “the rule of law” and respecting “diversity,” “inclusiveness,” and “openness.”

In the new plan, Japan set forth the new “four pillars” of cooperation for FOIP to address new challenges that have emerged due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's aggression against Ukraine among others. The first pillar is to emphasize the rule of law as the way to address the most fundamental issue of defending peace. The second pillar is to promote realistic and practical cooperation in an Indo-Pacific way, incorporating a wide range of areas into FOIP, such as climate change, food security, global health and cybersecurity. The third pillar is to pursue economic growth in a way that benefits everyone by strengthening a multi-layered connectivity. The fourth pillar is to extend efforts for security and safe use of the “Sea” to the “Air.”

In expanding cooperation for FOIP, it is also important to promote more strategic and effective use of ODA. Specifically, Japan will create attractive menus that leverage Japan's strength, proactively propose Co-creation for Common Agenda Initiative and promote the public-private-partnership, thus enabling to respond to the needs of each country.

(b) Cooperation with Allies and Like-minded

Countries

Cooperation with allies and like-minded countries is essential for promotion of a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

The G7 Hiroshima Summit, held at a time when the international community was at a turning point in history, reaffirmed the unwavering unity of the G7, following discussions focused on upholding a free and open international order based on the rule of law as a key perspective. At the Hiroshima Summit, the leaders of the G7, the invited countries and Ukraine discussed world peace and stability, and shared recognition of the importance of upholding a free and open international order based on the rule of law and the principles of the UN Charter, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As for Japan-Australia-India-U.S.(Quad), in chairing the Foreign Ministers' Meeting in 2024, Japan will further promote practical cooperation which truly benefits countries in the region toward the realization of FOIP.

As Japan-ROK relations get back on track and continue to improve, cooperation among Japan, the U.S. and the ROK is also making steady progress. Based on the outcome of the Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit at Camp David (U.S.) in August and other meetings, three countries will show that the Japan-U.S.-ROK cooperation is contributing to peace and stability in the region. Furthermore, since the security of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific are inseparable, Japan will also strengthen cooperation with European countries, the EU, and NATO.

(c) Response to Aggression against Ukraine

Russia's aggression against Ukraine is an outrageous act that shakes the very foundations of the international order. In addition, threats by Russia of nuclear weapon use, let alone its use, are inadmissible. Japan will continue to strongly promote sanctions against Russia and support for Ukraine in cooperation with the international community, including the G7, to stop Russia's aggression and to achieve a just and lasting peace in Ukraine.

Furthermore, based on the outcome of the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction held on February 19, 2024, which was attended by Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal of Ukraine, Japan will continue to advance efforts to further strongly promote the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine through public-private cooperation.

(2) Dealing with Security Challenges

As Japan faces the most severe and complex security environment since the end of World War II, Japan will protect its territory, territorial waters and airspace, as well as the lives and property of its citizens through diplomacy.

(a) Japan's Own Efforts

The National Security Strategy identifies diplomatic capabilities as the first element in forging Japan's overall national security. While linking diplomatic capabilities and defense capabilities, Japan will organically and effectively link its strong economy, advanced technological capabilities, and the various aspects of its soft power, such as rich culture, to pursue a comprehensive

diplomatic and security policy. In addition, Japan will steadily carry out the newly established Official Security Assistance (OSA) and actively work to promote cybersecurity and economic security.

In response to international information warfare in the cognitive domain through information manipulation, including spread of disinformation, Japan will gather and analyze information from various perspectives, carry out strategic communication, while building and strengthening its information security infrastructure.

(b) Strengthening of the Japan-U.S. Alliance

The Japan-U.S. Alliance is the cornerstone of Japan's foreign policy and security, and the foundation of the peace and prosperity in Indo-Pacific region. Japan and the U.S. will further strengthen deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, sustain and strengthen credibility and resilience of extended deterrence⁴, and optimize the response capabilities of U.S. forces in Japan. Japan will also promote efforts to mitigate impact on local communities through efforts of expeditiously relocating Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma to Henoko while maintaining the stable presence of U.S. forces in Japan.

Furthermore, Japan and the U.S. will continue to expand and deepen cooperation in the economic field from a strategic perspective, including based on the discussions at the Second Ministerial Meeting of the Japan-U.S. Economic Policy Consultative Committee (the Economic "2+2") held in November.

(c) Strengthening Cooperation with Allies and Like-minded Countries

In order to strengthen deterrence, it is also important to build and expand multilayered networks among allies and like-minded countries, in addition to the Japan-U.S. Alliance. To this end, while utilizing frameworks such as the Japan-U.S.-ROK and Japan-U.S.-Australia, Japan will strengthen security cooperation with Australia, India, the ROK, European countries, ASEAN countries, Canada, NATO, the EU, Pacific Island countries, and others.

With Australia, the Japan-Australia Reciprocal

Access Agreement entered into force in August and joint exercises have been held under it. The two countries have been continuing to steadily strengthen and expand cooperation in the field of security to ensure peace and prosperity in Indo-Pacific region.

With European countries, the EU and NATO, Japan has been strengthening security cooperation based on the recognition that the security of Euro-Atlantic and of Indo-Pacific regions are inseparable. European countries, including the EU and NATO, are increasing their interest in the Indo-Pacific, and against this backdrop, Foreign Minister Hayashi attended a NATO Foreign Ministers' Meeting in April, and in July, Prime Minister Kishida attended a NATO summit. In October, the Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement entered into force and in December, Japan, the UK and Italy signed the Convention on the Establishment of the "Global Combat Air Programme — GCAP International Government Organisation." Japan will continue to promote concrete cooperation with European countries, the EU and NATO to expand their engagement to the Indo-Pacific.

(3) Exploring New Frontiers of Economic Diplomacy

In these times of increasing severity and complexity, in order to demonstrate Japan's presence to the world with its strong and resilient economic power, Japan will develop new frontiers in economic diplomacy, emphasizing public-private partnerships and involving all stakeholders including startups. Japan must incorporate the growth of developing and emerging countries, known as the "Global South" to grow its own economy strongly. Japan will promote fine-tuned and strategic economic diplomacy, taking into account the challenges and characteristics of the various regions.

(a) Maintenance and Expansion of a Rules-based Free and Fair Economic Order

There are many issues to be addressed, including the World Trade Organization (WTO) reform to further strengthen the multilateral trading system, maintaining the high standards of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP),

⁴ Providing deterrence that a country possesses to its allies and partners.

ensuring implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement in a transparent manner, achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the region through the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), and international rule-making in areas involving new challenges such as AI and Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT).

Against this backdrop, the year 2024 marks the 60th anniversary since Japan joined the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and Japan will chair the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting (MCM) in May 2024. Japan will seize this opportunity to show its strong leadership toward the maintenance and expansion of a rules-based free and fair economic order, while working closely with its ally and like-minded countries.

(b) Efforts on Economic Security

As the scope of national security is expanding to the fields of economy, ensuring self-reliance of economy, and advantages and indispensability of technology, in other words economic security is also one of the important pillars of diplomacy in the new era. In order to ensure Japan's economic security, Japan will further strengthen its efforts to address economic security issues, including supply chain resilience and addressing economic coercion, by further strengthening coordination with its ally and like-minded countries, utilizing ODA, and cooperating closely between the public and private sectors.

(c) Linkage and Integration between Social and

Environmental Sustainability and the Economy

We now live in an era in which it is necessary to aim for linkage and integration between social and environmental sustainability and the economy. It is necessary that Japan will direct its efforts to realizing a virtuous circle: through the active promotion of SDGs, such as environment, human rights, and gender equality, by the corporate side, Japan will realize economic growth in a way that benefits society.

Specifically, Japan will involve various entities, including the private sector, to implement development

cooperation. In particular, Japan will implement the Co-creation for Common Agenda Initiative by using its advantages and ODA that mobilizes private-sector funds, which will achieve high-quality growth in developing countries and at the same time lead to Japan's growth. In addition, in actively encouraging Japanese companies to expand their overseas operations and increase exports of Japanese food products, its diplomatic missions overseas will provide strong backup for Japanese companies expanded locally. Furthermore, in order to boost productivity and growth of the Japanese economy, it is essential to attract high-quality human resources, advanced technology, and abundant funds from abroad to create innovation and employment. From this perspective, Japan will actively promote direct investment in Japan through its diplomatic missions overseas.

Furthermore, it is also important to actively utilize soft power, such as attractive Japanese culture, science and technology, and innovation.

Japan will work vigorously for the success of the 2025 World Exposition (Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan) and the International Horticultural Expo 2027, Yokohama, Japan, which are important opportunities to demonstrate Japan's strong and resilient economic strength.

Japan will further promote understanding of Japan and strategic communication, including through the "Partnership to Co-create a Future with the Next Generation: WA Project 2.0" announced at the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation in December. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) will continue to play a steadfast role toward the inscription of the "Sado Island Gold Mine" on the World Heritage List, while explaining its outstanding value as a cultural heritage to the international community and engaging in in-depth discussions with the relevant countries.

Regarding the safety of the discharge of ALPS treated water⁵ into the sea, Japan will maintain close coordination with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and provide detailed explanation both domestically and internationally, based on scientific evidence in a highly transparent manner.

⁵ ALPS treated water is water which is processed by devices such as ALPS (Advanced Liquid Processing System) to ensure that the radioactive materials other than tritium surely meet the regulatory standards for safety. ALPS treated water is then sufficiently diluted so that the concentrations of the radioactive materials including tritium is far below the regulatory standards for safety, and then finally discharged into the sea.

(4) Relations with Neighboring Countries and others

In order to maintain peace and prosperity in Japan and the region, Japan will build stable relations with our neighboring countries, while dealing head-on with difficult issues.

(a) Japan-China Relations

While there are various possibilities between Japan and China, there are a number of challenges and concerns, such as unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, which include the waters surrounding the Senkaku Islands, and a series of military activities by China, including those coordinated between China and Russia. Peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait are also important. Japan is also seriously concerned about the human rights situation in China and the situation in Hong Kong.

At the same time, both Japan and China have a significant responsibility for the peace and prosperity of the region and the international community. While comprehensively promoting a “Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests,” Japan will firmly maintain and assert its position and strongly request responsible actions by China, while at the same time continue to engage in dialogue including on issues of concern and cooperate on matters of common interest. It is important that both Japan and China make efforts to build such “constructive and stable relationship.”

(b) Japan-Republic of Korea (ROK) Relations

Japan will continue to communicate closely with the ROK, an important neighboring country, at various levels in order to broaden coordination and cooperation in a wider range of fields and to work together as partners to pave the way for a new era of the Japan-ROK bilateral relations.

Given the severe security environment in Indo-Pacific, close cooperation between the two countries is necessary now more than ever. As Japan-ROK relations get back on track and continue to improve, both countries will also further enhance coordination on global issues.

Takeshima is an inherent territory of Japan in light of historical facts and based on international law. Japan

will deal with the issue in a resolute manner based on this consistent position.

(c) Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Cooperation

From a broad perspective, Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Cooperation is important for regional and global peace and prosperity. Building on the discussions at the Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting in November, which was held for the first time in about four years, Japan will support the ROK's efforts as the Presidency to hold a Trilateral Summit at the earliest convenient time.

(d) Japan-Russia Relations

Japan-Russia relations remain to be in a difficult situation due to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, but Japan will firmly maintain its policy of concluding a peace treaty through the resolution of the Northern Territories issue. At the same time, Japan will appropriately deal with issues that need to be addressed by Japan and Russia as neighbors, such as those related to fishing and other economic activities as well as maritime safety, from the perspective of what is in Japan's national interests in its overall diplomacy.

In addition, the resumption of the Four-Island exchange program and the others is one of the highest priorities in Japan-Russia relations. Japan will continue to strongly urge Russia to resume such programs, with particular emphasis now on the Visits to the graves.

(e) North Korea

Regarding North Korea, Japan seeks to normalize its relations with North Korea, in accordance with the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, through comprehensively resolving outstanding issues of concern, such as the abductions, nuclear and missile issues, as well as settlement of the unfortunate past.

In particular, with the aging of the families of abductees, the abductions issue is a humanitarian and time sensitive issue with no time to spare. Japan will boldly take every possible action to realize the return of all abductees at the earliest possible date.

North Korea's launches of ballistic missile pose a grave and imminent threat to Japan's national security. It threatens peace and security in the region and the international community. It is totally unacceptable.

While ensuring the full implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, Japan will continue to call for the complete dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missiles programs, cooperating with the international community, including the U.S. and the ROK.

(5) Regional Diplomacy Issues

Emerging and developing countries, known as the Global South, are rapidly increasing their voices, and the power balance in the world changes dramatically. In order to lead the international community toward cooperation rather than division and confrontation, and to work together to create solutions to various challenges that faces the international community, it is important to engage with each country and region in a fine-tuned manner, taking into account their circumstances and characteristics, through an approach that emphasizes diversity and inclusiveness.

The stability and prosperity of ASEAN, which is the key of the Indo-Pacific, is extremely important for Japan and the entire Indo-Pacific region. Japan will further strengthen the relations with ASEAN countries by steadily implementing the new vision of cooperation for the next 50 years and a wide range of concrete cooperation which were set out at the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation held in December.

India is an important partner in the realization of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)," that shares fundamental values and strategic interests. Japan and India, both democratic countries in Asia, share a great responsibility for peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and the world. As division and confrontation deepen in the world, Japan and India, both of which have a solid democratic history with different cultural and historical backgrounds from European countries and the U.S., can play a significant role. Against this background, both Japan and India will further deepen cooperation in a range of fields, including economy, security, people-to-people exchanges, etc., under the "Special Strategic and Global Partnership."

Southwest Asia, including India, is a strategically important region located at a key point along the sea lanes of communication linking Japan with the Middle East and Africa. This region, with a population of

approximately 1.9 billion and high economic growth rates, is an attractive market and production base for Japanese companies. The countries in Southwest Asia and Japan have longstanding friendly ties, and over the years, Japan has deepened its engagement with the countries in the region in a wide range of areas, including security, economy, economic cooperation, and people-to-people exchange. Based on this foundation, Japan will further deepen its relations with the countries in Southwest Asia, which are important partners in maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

The Pacific Islands region is a very important region from the perspective of realizing FOIP. Based on the outcome of the Ministerial Interim Meeting of the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) held in February 2024, Japan will robustly support the development of Pacific Island countries and their unity, respecting the needs of each country, through the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10) in July 2024 and bilateral dialogues, in cooperation with like-minded countries.

The Middle East is one of the major sources of energy supply for the international community, and Japan depends on the region for about 90% of its crude oil imports. Therefore, peace and stability in the region, including the safety of navigation, are extremely important for energy security as well as the stability and growth of the global economy including Japan. On the other hand, the region has historically faced various conflicts and disputes. Tense and unstable situations as well as severe humanitarian conditions still persist. In recent years, a shift toward improved relations in the region had been observed, including the normalization of diplomatic relations between Israel and some Arab countries, but a series of developments triggered by terror attacks against Israel by Hamas and others in October has brought regional instability back to the fore over the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Japan is an ally of the U.S., and also has traditionally enjoyed good relations with countries in the Middle East. Toward maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law, including in the Middle East, Japan will proactively engage in diplomatic efforts to contribute to easing tensions and stabilizing the situation in the Middle East in close

cooperation with the countries concerned, while taking into consideration the issues of concern and needs for each country through various dialogue frameworks such as the “Japan-Arab Political Dialogue” and the “Japan-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)⁶ Foreign Ministers’ Meeting.”

Africa, which is expected to account for a quarter of the world’s population by 2050, is a young and hopeful continent with great potential for dynamic growth. For over 30 years since the launch of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in 1993, Japan has been making efforts based on the spirit of supporting African-led development. The TICAD Ministerial Meeting will be held in Tokyo in 2024 and TICAD 9 will be held in Yokohama in 2025. Japan will continue to further deepen Japan-Africa relations by addressing various issues together with African countries through the TICAD process among others.

Many Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) countries share values and principles such as freedom, democracy, and the rule of law with Japan and are important partners with a strong presence in the international arena. This region is also rich in mineral and energy, which are important for decarbonization, as well as food resources, and are becoming increasingly important in terms of supply chain resilience and ensuring economic security. Furthermore, the Nikkei (Japanese immigrants and their descendants) communities, numbering approximately 3.1 million in the LAC region, are the foundation of the traditional friendly relations between Japan and the LAC countries. In 2024, the world’s attention will be on LAC with Brazil hosting the G20 and Peru hosting the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), while the year marks Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024 between Japan and Caribbean countries. Japan will seize these opportunities to further strengthen the relationship with LAC countries.

The countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus, while having close historical and economic ties with

Russia, have been greatly affected by Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. Japan will promote cooperation as a partner in maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law, while also utilizing frameworks such as the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue.

(6) Cooperation for Global Issues

The world is facing a host of global issues, such as climate change, the environment, food and energy, global health including infectious diseases, population, refugees and the sustainable use of the oceans, it is necessary for us to work together to address these issues.

To this end, it is becoming increasingly important for the UN to fulfill its primary role. Japan will lead the efforts to strengthen the UN functions, including Security Council reform. In March 2024, Japan will assume the presidency of the Security Council, and engage in active discussions with other countries on important issues facing the international community.

In September 2024, the UN Summit of the Future will take place. That will be an occasion to strengthen strong and effective multilateralism with the UN at its core for the coming decades, and Japan will take a leading role to return to the starting point of “human dignity,” to promote the rule of law, and to forge “human-centered international cooperation” based on the principle of human security. Japan will also actively contribute to international efforts to comprehensively achieve SDGs by the year 2030. In addition, Japan will promote efforts to enable Japanese nationals to play even more active roles as staff members in international organizations.

At the same time, Japan will actively promote the realization of a world without nuclear weapons, human rights diplomacy in its own way, peacebuilding, and measures to counter terrorism and transnational organized crime. In particular, with regard to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, Japan will continue and strengthen its realistic and practical efforts toward a world without nuclear weapons by implementing

⁶ Gulf Cooperation Council: Established in 1981 by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait. The purpose is to coordinate, integrate, and collaborate among participating countries in all areas, including defense and economics.

measures one by one under the “Hiroshima Action Plan,”⁷ while having the “G7 Leader’s Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament” issued at the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May as a solid platform. Specifically, Japan will build on its efforts toward effective nuclear disarmament measures, such as enhancing the transparency of nuclear arsenals, the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the immediate commencement of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT). In addition, through efforts such as the International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons (IGEP),⁸ Japan will promote efforts to increase international momentum for nuclear disarmament and move step by step closer toward the realization of a world without nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, Japan will strongly promote and emphasize the importance of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) as one of its major foreign policies. To this end, a taskforce was established under the Foreign Minister in January 2024. Japan will continue

to promote WPS using all the tools at our disposal, including ODA.

(7) Strengthening of Comprehensive Foreign and Consular Policy Implementation Structure

Personnel is a key asset to diplomacy. In order to achieve steady results in the above-mentioned activities, it is essential to strengthen the comprehensive foreign and consular policy implementation structure.

To this end, MOFA will take steps to improve the working environment and the livelihood of its overseas staff members, strengthen personnel structure, improve financial basis, promote digital transformation (DX) and workstyle reforms, and fundamentally enhance the diplomatic and consular implementation structure. In preparation for an emergency, MOFA will promote the strengthening of diplomatic missions overseas and enhance their readiness to respond to crises, including the protection of Japanese nationals, in a timely and agile manner, including personnel structure.

⁷ This was proposed by Prime Minister Kishida at the Tenth NPT Review Conference held in August 2022. As the first step of a realistic road map which would take us from “the reality” of the harsh security environment to the “ideal” of a world without nuclear weapons, Japan would simultaneously engage in nuclear risk reduction and take the following five actions: (1) a shared recognition on the importance of continuing the record of non-use of nuclear weapons, (2) enhancing transparency, (3) maintaining the decreasing trend of the global nuclear stockpile, (4) securing nuclear non-proliferation and promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and (5) encouraging visits to the affected communities by international leaders and others.

⁸ An international meeting of which Prime Minister Kishida announced the launch in his policy speech in January 2022. The meeting brings together intellectuals and both incumbent and former political leaders from both nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states to discuss a concrete pathway toward a world without nuclear weapons. In 2023, the second meeting was held in Tokyo in April and the third in Nagasaki in December.

SPECIAL
FEATURE

Japan's Initiatives Toward the Recovery and Reconstruction of Ukraine

As Russia's aggression against Ukraine becomes protracted, the damage of war has affected all aspects of the infrastructure and institutions that supports people's lives, such as energy, transport infrastructure, housing, and schools. The people of Ukraine have been placed in a very difficult situation. Even as the aggression continues, it is urgent issue for Japan to provide recovery and reconstruction support standing by Ukraine so that they can envision their short-term and mid- to long-term future.

Japan has experienced the devastation after the war and a series of serious natural disasters, but with the support of the international community, it has achieved remarkable recovery every time. Japan has experience and expertise in the process of recovery and reconstruction gained through overcoming these difficulties. Ukraine also has expectations that Japan's experience and technology will assist with its long-term reconstruction. In order to contribute to the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine, utilizing this experience and knowledge, the Government of Japan will promote priority efforts in seven areas in particular, ranging from humanitarian support to the phase of livelihood reconstruction and recovery assistance, and the phase of economic reconstruction and industrial enhancement. Specifically, Japan will provide urgent assistance in the following two areas: (1) mine action and debris clearance, which are prerequisites for recovery and reconstruction, and (2) improvement in the humanitarian situation and support for livelihood reconstruction. While working on these two areas, Japan will also advance initiatives in the following three areas for the economic reconstruction and industrial enhancement of Ukraine: (3) productivity improvement in agriculture and livestock raising, which are key industries in Ukraine, (4) manufacturing in emerging fields such as biotechnology, and (5) development of the digital and IT/ICT industries geared toward employment of IT human resources. In addition, Japan provides assistance to lay the foundations for sustainable reconstruction by supporting Ukraine's efforts in the following two areas: (6) improvement of the basis for livelihoods such as electricity and transportation infrastructure, and (7) anti-corruption measures and the strengthening of governance.

In particular, dealing with landmines and unexploded ordinance is not only essential to ensuring the safety and security of residents, but is also a prerequisite for recovery and reconstruction that is indispensable for rebuilding livelihood, agriculture, and industry. The Government of Japan has been providing equipment such as landmine detectors and crane trucks for handling unexploded ordinance to the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SESU), which is in charge of dealing with landmines and unexploded ordinance. In January, in cooperation with Cambodia, where Japan has been supporting mine and unexploded ordinance clearance efforts for more than 20 years, Japan conducted drills and training for SESU staff on the use of the ALIS¹ landmine detectors, which use Japanese technology. In July, in cooperation with Poland in addition to Cambodia, follow-up training was held in Poland, whose soil resembles that of Ukraine, using ALIS that Japan had previously provided. Furthermore, the Government of Japan contributed an additional 50 ALIS units and 40 vehicles in November.

Additionally, in the wake of Russia's intensive attack on power plants and other energy infrastructure, the Government of Japan handed over two autotransformers in September as energy infrastructure assistance for recovery and reconstruction through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support people's lives. This equipment is estimated to benefit approximately 500,000 citizens in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine. Moreover, in January 2024, the Government of Japan supported the transportation of seven autotransformers, which are expected to benefit more than five million people, and also provided five gas turbine generators, including ones manufactured by Japanese companies, through the UNDP and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

In addition, the war has put people such as women and children in a particularly vulnerable position. It is necessary to protect them and ensure that "human dignity" is preserved. Based on this recognition, from the initial emergency humanitarian assistance to the mid- to long-term rebuilding of livelihoods, reconstruction, and industrial enhancement phases, Japan will stand closely with the people of Ukraine, including women and children, to promote specific initiatives, taking into account the perspective of "Women, Peace and Security (WPS)" (See Chapter 3, Section 1-8). As specific initiatives that give form to the concept of WPS, the supplementary budget for FY2023 included measures for the protection of women as an urgent issue, including healthcare, shelters development, and the protection of victims of gender-based violence. In addition, the Government of Japan will undertake activities with a broad scope, from short to long term, by promoting women's participation in humanitarian assistance and reconstruction through women's empowerment, as well as by supporting children's education as an investment in future leaders.



Prime Minister Kishida delivering the keynote speech at the Leaders' Session of the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction (February 19, 2024, Tokyo; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

As Ukraine demonstrates enormous needs for reconstruction, it is essential to provide assistance with active involvement of the private sector. The Government of Japan is advancing initiatives to accelerate efforts for realizing recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine through public-private cooperation.

As a specific initiative, the Preparatory Meeting on the Reconstruction of Ukraine, comprised of director-level officials of relevant ministries and agencies, was established in order to work on close coordination among them. On May 15, Prime Minister Kishida attended the opening of the first meeting, which was chaired by Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary KIHARA Seiji. In addition, meetings were held on June 19, chaired by Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Kihara, and on October 5 and January 30, 2024, chaired by Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary MURAI Hideki.

Furthermore, at the Ukraine Recovery Conference co-hosted in London by the Governments of the United Kingdom and Ukraine on June 21 and 22, Foreign Minister Hayashi announced that the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction will be held in Tokyo so that the Japanese public and private sectors can strongly support the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine.

Thereafter, working toward the success of the conference, a visit to Ukraine accompanied by private companies was conducted to directly hear the needs of the Ukrainian side and to create an important opportunity for formulating concrete assistance projects. Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Ukraine on September 9 with Japanese business representatives, and State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUJI Kiyoto and State Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry IWATA Kazuchika visited Ukraine on November 20, as the economic mission with the participation of Japanese companies, including several start-ups with a strong interest in the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine. When Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Ukraine on January 7, 2024, based on these achievements, she confirmed with President Zelenskyy and, in particular, Prime Minister Shmyhal of Ukraine, who would attend the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction, Japan's intention to make the Conference successful by involving the private sector, and link these to the reconstruction of Ukraine.

Following these developments, the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction was held on February 19, 2024, with Prime Minister Shmyhal in attendance, as well as participants from many Japanese and Ukrainian private-sector businesses. Prime Minister Kishida expressed that support to Ukraine is “investing in the future” of both countries and the whole globe. He outlined how “Japan’s unique contribution” would be made through public-private cooperation to promote Japanese private investment and create employment in Ukraine. This contribution is to be based on the three Principles of inclusiveness, partnership, and knowledge and technology, and be carried out through following five Actions; the signing of the Tax Convention and commencement of negotiations for a review of the Bilateral Investment Treaty, support through international financial institutions, implementation of public-private partnership projects through Official Development Assistance (ODA) and JICA’s Private Sector Investment Finance, establishment of an office of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) in Kyiv and new credit lines via NEXI², and measures to relax the multi entry visa requirements. At the same time, Prime Minister Kishida stated that the solidarity of the international community to support the reconstruction of Ukraine needs to be further strengthened, and that realization of the reconstruction of Ukraine is the very interest of Japan and the international community as a whole. Specific results from the Conference included the announcement of a Joint Communiqué coordinated between the Governments of Japan and Ukraine, and a total of 56 public-private sector cooperation documents including the Tax Convention signed the same day. In addition, Foreign Minister Kamikawa hosted a “WPS Session” for the purpose of considering concrete ways to incorporate WPS perspective into the recovery and reconstruction efforts of Ukraine, which saw lively discussion from government, business, and civil society perspectives. At the session, Foreign Minister Kamikawa emphasized the need for “reintegration” of families, communities, and the entire nationals in Ukraine, and introduced Japan’s approach toward this. She also stated that she would move forward with international WPS efforts in the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine. In this way, through the holding of the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction, Japan communicated a strong message to the international community about the necessity of ongoing assistance to Ukraine.

The Government of Japan will build on the outcomes from the Conference, continuing its initiatives to further strongly promote the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine through public-private cooperation.



Foreign Minister Hayashi making a speech at the Ukraine Recovery Conference (June 21, London, UK)



Courtesy call to Yuliia Svyrydenko, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy of Ukraine, by the economic mission (November 20, Kyiv, Ukraine)



Courtesy call to President Zelenskyy of Ukraine by Foreign Minister Kamikawa (January 7, 2024, Kyiv, Ukraine)

¹ ALIS: Advanced Landmine Imaging System

² NEXI: Nippon Export and Investment Insurance

SPECIAL
FEATURE

Japan's Initiatives in the Gaza Strip, Palestine

In response to the situation surrounding the Gaza Strip, Palestine, since October 7, Japan has provided emergency humanitarian aid through international organizations, as well as additional humanitarian aid through supplementary budgets. Moreover, Japan has provided relief supplies to Gaza through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

On November 8, the first shipment of supplies including tents and blankets was transported to El Arish International Airport in Egypt and delivered to the Gaza Strip with the cooperation of organizations such as the Egyptian and Palestine Red Crescent Societies. Those supplies have been used since at shelters. On December 1, the second shipment of supplies including medical consumables such as bandages, gauze, and surgical gloves was transported to El Arish International Airport and delivered to Gaza with the cooperation of the Egyptian and Palestine Red Crescent Societies. Staff from JICA and the Embassy of Japan in Egypt attended the relief supplies handover to the Egyptian Red Crescent, and also conducted on-site surveys of supplies transport and logistics bottlenecks from the airport to Rafah Crossing (the checkpoint on the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip). The medical consumables were distributed to medical facilities such as hospitals and health centers in the Gaza Strip for use whenever necessary.

In addition, Japan dispatched a survey team via JICA from December 25 (until late January 2024) comprised of doctors and others to Cairo in neighboring Egypt to ascertain requirements in Gaza in the emergency humanitarian assistance as well as medical care fields. The team, collaborating with the World Health Organization (WHO), which is in charge of coordinating emergency medical assistance on the ground to appropriately allocate medical resources, provided coordination assistance in the medical data management field by utilizing Japan's know-how in emergency disaster relief, and ascertained the emergency humanitarian assistance requirements of the people of Palestine through cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Population of Egypt.

Japan will continue to make persistent diplomatic efforts toward improving humanitarian conditions and calming the situation in the Gaza Strip. At the same time, Japan will also continue to provide assistance through JICA and international organizations based on cooperation with other relevant countries.



Relief supplies tents in use in the Gaza Strip (December, the Gaza Strip, Palestine; Photo: JICA)



Relief supplies arriving at El Arish International Airport (December, Egypt; Photo: JICA)

Chapter 2

Resilient and Unwavering Regional Diplomacy

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1

Promotion of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” Based on the Rule of Law

1 Overview

The Indo-Pacific region, which stretches from the Asia Pacific across the Indian Ocean to the Middle East and Africa, is the core of the world’s vitality and supports more than half of the world’s population. At the same time, the region is home to several countries with strong military capabilities, and there have been some acts that shake the very foundation of the international order based on the rule of law. The region also faces a variety of threats, such as piracy, terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, natural disasters, and illegal fishing. It is essential to ensure peace and prosperity in the entire region and beyond, through establishing a free and open order based on the rule of law.

Japan has long emphasized the importance of taking a holistic view of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, as seen in the “Confluence of the Two Seas” speech regarding the Indian and Pacific Oceans delivered by Prime Minister Abe to the Indian Parliament in 2007. In August 2016, this concept was brought to fruition as the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” vision, which Prime Minister Abe announced to the world in his keynote speech at the 6th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) in Kenya. In his speech, Prime Minister Abe stated that the key to stability and prosperity of the international community is the dynamism created by combining “Two Continents”—rapidly-growing Asia and potential-filled Africa—and “Two Oceans”—free and open Pacific and Indian Oceans—and that Japan would work to realize prosperity in Asia and Africa.

Japan has widely promoted efforts to realize FOIP based on the rule of law in cooperation with

like-minded countries from 2016 to the present. As a result, the vision of FOIP first proposed by Japan has now gained broad support in the international community, including the U.S., Australia, India, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Republic of Korea (ROK), the European Union (EU), and other European countries. Various consultations and cooperation are also underway. Numerous policy documents on the Indo-Pacific have been released, such as the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) adopted at the ASEAN Summit in June 2019, the Joint Communication on the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific presented by the EU in September 2021, the Indo-Pacific Strategy presented by the U.S. in February 2022, Canada’s Indo-Pacific Strategy, and the Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region presented by the ROK in November 2022.

In March 2023 in India, Prime Minister Kishida announced the New Plan¹ for a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).” He explained in detail the approach and efforts for FOIP at a historic turning point to achieve the goal of leading the international community toward cooperation rather than division and confrontation.

The new plan clearly emphasizes the importance of “rulemaking through dialogue,” “equal partnership among nations,” and an approach focusing on “human” as the approaches to be taken going forward, while maintaining the core principles of defending “freedom” and “the rule of law,” and respecting “diversity,” “inclusiveness,” and “openness.” The new plan also clarifies that Japan will strengthen coordination with various countries, expand the networks among countries that share the FOIP vision, and direct efforts

¹ For more information on the New Plan for FOIP, see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: https://www.mofa.go.jp/tp/pc/page3e_001336.html



in the spirit of co-creation. Furthermore, it sets forth “four pillars” of cooperation for FOIP (Principles for Peace and Rules for Prosperity, Addressing Challenges in an Indo-Pacific Way, Multi-layered Connectivity, and Extending Efforts for Security and Safe Use from the “Sea” to the “Air”).

2 Specific Initiatives Under the New Plan

The “four pillars” of the new plan are organized as “pillars of cooperation for FOIP” suited for a historic turning point in order to realize a world that FOIP aims for.

(1) Principles for Peace and Rules for Prosperity

The first pillar, “Principles for Peace and Rules for Prosperity,” is the backbone of FOIP. In the international community, it is important to defend “peace” and create an international environment where “freedom,” “transparency,” and “the rule of law” are upheld and the weak are not beaten by force. Japan will promote the sharing of fundamental principles that the international community should uphold for peace; peacebuilding; pursuit of a free, fair, and just economic order in a manner that adapts to changing times; and rulemaking to prevent opaque and unfair practices.

(2) Addressing Challenges in an Indo-Pacific Way

The second pillar, “Addressing Challenges in an Indo-Pacific Way,” is the new focus of cooperation for FOIP. Japan will expand cooperation for FOIP through the dramatic increase in the importance of “global commons,” such as climate and the environment, global health, and cyberspace, thereby enhancing the resilience and sustainability of societies. For example, in terms of climate, environment, and energy security, Japan will promote the “Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC)” concept, which aims to achieve both decarbonization and economic growth, “assistance for loss and damage” to countries vulnerable to natural disasters, and the “Blue Ocean Vision” to protect the abundant oceans.

(3) Multi-layered Connectivity

The third pillar, “Multi-layered Connectivity,” is the core element of cooperation for FOIP. In order to achieve vigorous growth for the entire region, countries need to stay connected in various aspects. Japan will increase each country’s options and help them overcome their vulnerabilities through initiatives to further enhance connectivity. For example, Japan will work to enhance “knowledge” connectivity by further developing “human” connectivity and promote digital connectivity.

(4) Extending Efforts for Security and Safe Use from the “Sea” to the “Air”

The fourth pillar, “Extending Efforts for Security and Safe Use from the ‘Sea’ to the ‘Air,’” places “marine routes” at the center as the “focus of FOIP” and ensures the security and safety of the entire “public domain,” incorporating secured use of air domain in a safe and stable manner. Japan will work to ensure the “three principles of the rule of law at sea,” strengthen maritime law enforcement capabilities, enhance maritime security, and promote safe and stable use of air space.

3 Collaboration and Cooperation with Other Countries

In 2023, Japan remained actively engaged in diplomatic activities for the realization of FOIP.

(1) United States (U.S.)

In January, Prime Minister Kishida visited Washington, D.C. and held a Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting with President Joseph Biden. Both leaders concurred again that Japan and the U.S. will continue to promote endeavors to realize FOIP. The Joint Statement of the United States and Japan issued as a result of the meeting confirmed that Japan-U.S. cooperation today is unprecedented, rooted in a shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific and a peaceful and prosperous world, and guided by shared values and principles, including the rule of law.

Subsequently as well, Japan and the U.S. have confirmed that they will continue to closely cooperate in

various fields, including diplomacy, security, and the economy, based on strong Japan-U.S. relations centered on the Japan-U.S. Alliance, the cornerstone of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, through a series of Japan-U.S. Summit Meetings and Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meetings, as well as the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (Japan-U.S. "2+2") in January and the Japan-U.S. Economic Policy Consultative Committee (Economic "2+2") in November.

(2) Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

Japan and ASEAN released the Joint Statement of the 23rd ASEAN-Japan Summit on Cooperation on ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific in November 2020, confirming that the AOIP and FOIP share fundamental principles. At the ASEAN-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July 2023, Foreign Minister Hayashi stated that Japan is implementing many concrete cooperation projects in line with the four priority areas of the AOIP (maritime cooperation, connectivity, the SDGs, as well as economic and other possible areas of cooperation), while noting that Southeast Asia is clearly positioned as an important region in the new plan for FOIP announced by Prime Minister Kishida in March. In addition, during the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings in September, Prime Minister Kishida announced the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative to further strengthen connectivity in both tangible and intangible ways. Furthermore, at the ASEAN-Japan Summit, Prime Minister Kishida spoke about support for the AOIP and working together to ensure that many countries share and cooperate with the principles and activities raised by the AOIP, including openness, transparency, inclusiveness, and a rules-based framework. Moreover, at the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation in December, the leaders adopted the Joint Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation outlining a new vision for cooperation and its Implementation Plan indicating extensive and specific cooperation. The leaders also concurred on aiming for a world where all countries can pursue peace and prosperity, and where the principles such

as democracy, the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights and fundamental freedom are upheld.

(3) Canada

At the Japan-Canada Summit Meeting held during Prime Minister Kishida's visit to Ottawa in January, the two leaders confirmed cooperation toward realizing FOIP through steady implementation of the "Japan-Canada Action Plan for Contributing to a Free and Open Indo-Pacific" announced by both countries in 2022. The two countries also confirmed steady progress on cooperation in the fields of security and economic security mentioned in the Action Plan, including at the May and November Summit Meetings and at the Foreign Ministers' Meeting in October.

(4) Australia

In August, the Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) entered into force, adding a new framework for Japan and Australia to further contribute to the peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. At the Japan-Australia Summit Meeting held in India in September, the two leaders welcomed the progress made in defense cooperation under the RAA and concurred on strengthening concrete cooperation, guided by the new Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation (signed in October 2022), which confirms the two countries' unwavering commitment to FOIP.

(5) India

In March, upon his visit to Delhi, Prime Minister Kishida delivered a policy speech at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), and announced the new plan for FOIP. In addition, at the Japan-India Summit Meeting in May, during discussions on bilateral relations, the two countries shared recognition regarding the importance of FOIP and confirmed to advance cooperation in various fields. Furthermore, at the 15th Japan-India Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue in July, Japan and India, which share fundamental values and strategic interests, confirmed the importance of cooperation toward realizing FOIP.

(6) Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad)

The four countries of Japan, Australia, India, and the U.S. share recognition of the importance of promoting practical cooperation in various fields, including critical and emerging technologies, quality infrastructure, and maritime security, and expanding cooperation to more countries in order to realize FOIP, with the goal of strengthening a rules-based free and open international order. The Quad also fully supports the AOIP and welcomes the proactive efforts by European and other countries toward FOIP. At the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Leaders’ Meeting held in Japan in May, the Quad leaders expressed their determination to uphold a free and open international order based on the rule of law and confirmed the importance of developing practical cooperation that will truly benefit the region. There was also reaffirmation of the firm commitment to the realization of FOIP at the Quad Foreign Ministers’ Meeting held in the U.S. in September.

(7) Republic of Korea

At the Japan-ROK Summit Meeting in March, the two leaders confirmed the importance of realizing FOIP and shared the view that like-minded countries should work together to uphold the free and open international order based on the rule of law. They also concurred on exchanging views and maintaining close communication on cooperation for the realization of FOIP at subsequent summit meetings and other opportunities.

(8) Japan-U.S.-ROK

Recognizing that the collaboration among Japan, the U.S., and the ROK is essential for regional peace and stability beyond issues related to North Korea, the three countries have been enhancing collaboration at multiple levels, through holding summit meetings, foreign ministers’ meetings, vice-ministerial meetings, and Heads of Delegation Meetings for the Six-Party Talks. Amidst this, the three countries have also been confirming trilateral cooperation toward the realization of FOIP. At the Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in July, the ministers exchanged views on cooperation toward the realization of FOIP. In addition, at the Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit held in August at Camp David in the U.S., the leaders of the three

countries concurred on cooperation to ensure that the Indo-Pacific is thriving, connected, resilient, stable, and secure. They also concurred to launch an annual Japan-U.S.-ROK Trilateral Indo-Pacific Dialogue to cooperate on implementing the trilateral approach to the Indo-Pacific and to continuously identify new areas for common action. They also committed to work closely with ASEAN partners to support the robust implementation and mainstreaming of the AOIP (See the Special Feature on page 37).

(9) Europe

A The EU

At the Japan-EU Summit Meeting in July, Prime Minister Kishida stated that as the international community faces a historic turning point, it is becoming increasingly important for like-minded countries that share values and principles to work together beyond regional boundaries. He also stated that he would like to confirm close cooperation between Japan and the EU and deepen discussions on concrete measures for cooperation to maintain and strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law. In addition, in May, Foreign Minister Hayashi attended the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum co-hosted by Sweden and the EU in person and shared the importance of cooperation among like-minded countries with the participating countries.

B The United Kingdom (UK)

In March, the UK announced the Integrated Review Refresh of security, defense, development and foreign policy, and expressed support for the FOIP vision and making engagement in the Indo-Pacific a permanent pillar of its international policy. At the Japan-UK Leader’s Working Dinner in May, Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced the “Hiroshima Accord: An Enhanced Japan-UK Global Strategic Partnership.” They also confirmed promotion of interoperable, resilient, and cross-domain defense and security cooperation as each other’s closest security partner in Asia and Europe committed to the vision of FOIP, and determined to strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law. In October, the Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) entered into force as a framework

to improve interoperability between the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and UK forces and to further promote security and defense cooperation between the two countries.

C France

In January, Prime Minister Kishida and President Emmanuel Macron held a Japan-France Summit Meeting, in which they confirmed that the security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific are inseparable and welcomed progress on substantial cooperation, including reciprocal visits of assets and joint exercises between Japan and France. In the same month, Japan opened the Consular Office in Nouméa, New Caledonia, which has geopolitical importance in the Indo-Pacific region and serves as a crucial stronghold for advancing Japan-France cooperation toward the realization of FOIP. In September in New York, Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Catherine Colonna and expressed the desire to further strengthen relations with France, an “Indo-Pacific nation” with territory in the Pacific and an “exceptional partner.” In November, the two foreign ministers concurred to continue close cooperation, both bilaterally and through the G7 framework, at the Japan-France Foreign Ministers’ Dinner in Tokyo. In addition, in December, Prime Minister Kishida also held a summit telephone call with President Macron and issued a roadmap for Japan-France cooperation, including cooperation to realize FOIP.

D Germany

Based on Germany’s Indo-Pacific guidelines approved by the Cabinet in September 2020, security cooperation between Germany and Japan was further deepened as the Government of Germany has worked to strengthen its engagement in the region, including by dispatching a naval frigate in November 2021 and air force aircraft in September 2022 to the Indo-Pacific region, including Japan. In the Joint Statement

issued during the Japan-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations in March 2023, it was confirmed that the security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific are closely interlinked and that concrete cooperation between Japan and Germany in the Indo-Pacific region will be strengthened, amid the ever-increasing importance of maintaining and strengthening the free and open international order based on the rule of law. In November, the two countries reached an agreement in principle on the Japan-Germany Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (Japan-Germany ACSA).

E Italy

In May, Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni held a Japan-Italy Summit Meeting and concurred on deepening discussions on concrete cooperation in security and defense fields, including through the Japan-Italy Politico-Military (PM) Dialogue.

In 2023, Italy dispatched to the Indo-Pacific Ocean the frigate *Francesco Morosini*, which made a port call at Yokosuka in June. In July, the Italian Navy and Maritime Self-Defense Force conducted joint training in the East China Sea. Furthermore, in August, Italy dispatched its air force aircraft, including F-35s, to the Japan Air Self-Defense Force’s Komatsu Air Base to conduct joint training between the Italian Air Force and the Air Self-Defense Force.

F The Netherlands

In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a Japan-Netherlands Foreign Ministers’ Working Lunch with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wopke Hoekstra, in which they discussed strengthening cooperation to realize FOIP. In September, Prime Minister Kishida held a Japan-Netherlands Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Mark Rutte, in which they discussed strengthening cooperation, including in the security field, to maintain and strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

Trilateral Cooperation among Japan, the United States, and the Republic of Korea

The first Japan-U.S.-Republic of Korea (ROK) Summit Meeting was held in November 1994 on the occasion of an APEC Economic Leaders’ summit meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia. Prime Minister MURAYAMA Tomiichi, President Bill Clinton of the U.S., and President Kim Young-sam of the ROK at that time discussed issues such as North Korea’s nuclear issue. Since then, the three countries have held meetings at various levels, including the leaders’ and foreign ministers’ levels, focusing on dealing with North Korea, including its nuclear and missile issues as well as the abductions issue.

As the current security environment surrounding the three countries becomes increasingly severe, the trilateral cooperation among Japan, the U.S., and the ROK is increasingly important not only in dealing with North Korea but also in realizing peace and stability in the region and beyond, as well as in realizing a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” based on the rule of law.

In August 2023, at the invitation of President Joseph Biden of the U.S., Prime Minister Kishida visited Camp David, the U.S. President’s country residence in Maryland, and held a Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting with President Biden and President Yoon Suk Yeol of the ROK. This summit was the first-ever stand-alone Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting, not held on the margins of an international forum. Prime Minister Kishida and President Yoon were the first foreign dignitaries hosted by President Biden at Camp David.

At this historic meeting, the three leaders declared a “new era of trilateral partnership,” building upon their respective strong bilateral relationships, in order to maintain a free and open international order based on the rule of law. Additionally, the meeting achieved significant outcomes in three domains: enhancing strategic coordination between the Japan-U.S. Alliance and the U.S.-ROK Alliance, thereby bringing trilateral security cooperation to new heights; expanding the scope of the trilateral cooperation; and developing a foundation to enhance the trilateral cooperation in a continuous and stable manner.



The Japan, U.S. and ROK leaders at the press conference (August 18, Camp David, U.S.; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)



Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting (August 18, Camp David, U.S.; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

After the meeting, the leaders issued the three documents: the “Camp David Principles,” serving as guidelines for promoting Japan-U.S.-ROK cooperation from a medium- to long-term perspective; the “Joint Statement of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States,” outlining their views on regional issues as well as concrete cooperation and frameworks for the three countries; and the “Commitment to Consult among Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States,” stating that the governments of the three countries are committed to consulting trilaterally with each other, in an expeditious manner, to coordinate their responses to regional challenges, provocations, and threats that affect their collective interests and security.

Japan, the U.S., and the ROK have concurred to hold trilateral meetings at various levels, including at the leaders’ level, at least annually. The Government of Japan will promote Japan-U.S.-ROK cooperation in a multi-layered and stable manner, including through newly established frameworks for cooperation, such as the Trilateral Indo-Pacific Dialogue, the Trilateral Development and Humanitarian Assistance Policy Dialogue, and the trilateral working group on North Korea’s cyber activities.

2

Asia and Oceania

1 Overview

(General Overview)

The Asia-Oceania region includes numerous emerging countries with remarkable growth. It is a dynamic region where diverse cultures and races intermingle and influence each other. This region, with an abundance of human resources, drives the world economy and has been increasing its presence. Of the world population of 8.0 billion, approximately 3.7 billion live in East Asia Summit (EAS) participating countries¹ excluding the U.S. and Russia. This represents about 47% of the world's population.² Their combined nominal gross domestic product (GDP) is 32.8 trillion U.S. dollars (2022), and accounts for more than 30% of the world total.³

Furthermore, the region enjoys close economic relations and sees growing interdependence. Further economic growth is expected, and the strong growth within the region will also bring affluence and vitality to Japan.

Meanwhile, the security environment in the Asia-Oceania region is becoming increasingly severe as seen in the following developments: the nuclear and missile development by North Korea; the strengthening and modernization of military forces in a manner that lacks transparency and attempts to change the status quo in the region by force that goes against the rule of law and openness; and tension among the relevant countries and regions growing over the maritime issues. Other factors hindering the stable growth of the region include economic and financial systems still under development, environmental pollution, unstable demand and supply of food and resources, frequent natural disasters, terrorism, and aging populations.

Within this context, Japan has been actively engaging in diplomacy including at the leaders' and foreign ministers' levels, and is maintaining and developing good relations with neighboring countries. In 2023, Prime Minister Kishida visited India, the G20 Presidency, in March and held a Japan-India Summit Meeting, and in May he visited both Singapore and the Republic of Korea (ROK) and held Summit Meetings with each country. At the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, Prime Minister Kishida held bilateral meetings with the leaders of India, Indonesia, the Cook Islands, the ROK, Australia, Viet Nam, as well as an exchange of views among Japan-U.S.-ROK Leaders and a Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Leaders' Meeting. When Prime Minister Kishida visited Lithuania to attend the NATO Summit Meeting in July, he held a Japan-Australia-New Zealand-ROK Leaders' Meeting, and also held bilateral meetings with the leaders of the ROK, New Zealand, and other countries. In August, he visited the U.S. and held the first-ever stand-alone Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting.

In September, Prime Minister Kishida visited Indonesia and India to attend the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings and the G20 New Delhi Summit. In Indonesia, in addition to holding Summit Meetings with Southeast Asian countries and the Cook Islands, he also attended the ASEAN-Japan Summit, the ASEAN Plus Three (Japan-China-ROK) Summit, and the East Asia Summit (EAS), where he confirmed the further strengthening of Japan-ASEAN relations, which marked the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. Prime Minister Kishida also deepened discussions on urgent issues facing the region and the international community, including Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the situations in the East China Sea

¹ ASEAN (member states: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam), Japan, China, the ROK, India, Australia, and New Zealand)

² Source: United Nations Population Fund

³ Source: World Bank

and the South China Sea, and the situation in North Korea, and confirmed that Japan's will to strengthen cooperation with the relevant countries. In India, he held Summit Meetings with the leaders of India, Australia, the ROK, and other countries. In November, he visited the Philippines and Malaysia, held bilateral meetings with the leaders of both countries, and was the first Japanese Prime Minister to deliver a speech to a joint session of the Philippine Senate and House of Representatives. Furthermore, in November Prime Minister Kishida also visited the U.S. to attend the APEC Leaders' Meeting, held a Japan-China Summit Meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, held Summit Meetings with Thailand, the ROK, Australia, and other countries, and held an Informal Talk among Japan-U.S.-ROK leaders. In December, Prime Minister Kishida hosted the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation in Tokyo, and, after reviewing ASEAN-Japan relations over the past half-century, the Joint Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, which outlines a new vision for cooperation, and its concrete cooperation Implementation Plan were adopted.

When Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Germany in February, he attended a Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and in March, he visited India, where he held a Japan-India Foreign Ministers' Meeting and a Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Furthermore, in March he also visited the Solomon Islands and the Cook Islands and held Foreign Ministers' Meetings with both countries. In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited China and paid a courtesy call to State Council Premier Li Qiang, had a meeting and dinner with Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee Wang Yi, and held a Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting and Working Lunch with State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs Qin Gang.

In July, Foreign Minister Hayashi attended the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings held in Indonesia and had meaningful discussions on a wide range of topics, from specific cooperation in the region centered around ASEAN, to the regional situation. He also held Foreign Ministers' Meetings with several Southeast Asian countries, the ROK, and Bangladesh, met with Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs

Commission of the CPC Central Committee Wang Yi, and attended a Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting and a Japan-U.S.-Philippines Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Furthermore, at the end of July, he visited India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives, and held Foreign Ministers' Meetings with each country.

When Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited the U.S. in September to participate in the UN General Assembly High-level Week, she held bilateral Foreign Ministers' Meetings with Indonesia, Australia, the ROK, India, and other countries, and attended a Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Foreign Ministers' Meeting, a Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Informal Talk, and a Japan-U.S.-Philippines Foreign Ministers' Meeting. In October, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Brunei, Viet Nam, Laos, and Thailand, and, when she visited the U.S. to attend the APEC Ministerial Meeting in November, she held bilateral Foreign Ministers' Meetings with the ROK, the Philippines, and other countries, as well as a Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting. She also visited the ROK in November to attend the Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting, it being the first face-to-face meeting in four years, and to hold ministerial meetings with Minister of Foreign Affairs Park Jin of the ROK and with Foreign Minister Wang Yi of China, respectively.

Japan is strengthening various cooperation in the Asia-Oceania region and will continue to make meaningful use of various cooperative frameworks.

(Japan-U.S. Alliance and Indo-Pacific region)

The Japan-U.S. Alliance, with the Japan-U.S. security arrangements as its core, is the foundation of peace, security, and prosperity, not only for Japan but also for the Indo-Pacific region. In the midst of an increasingly severe regional security environment, the importance of the Japan-U.S. Alliance has never been greater. Under the unprecedentedly strong cooperative relationship between Japan and the U.S., since the inauguration of President Biden in January 2021, Japan and the U.S. have held 19 Summit Meetings and 32 Foreign Ministers' Meetings, including telephone calls (as of December 2023). The two countries have been striving to maintain peace and stability in the region and the international community by constantly communicating

and collaborating at all levels, including at the summit level and at the foreign minister level. Both Japan and the U.S. are promoting cooperation toward realizing a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP),” and are also deepening their cooperation to address regional issues, including the situations with China, North Korea, with Russia and Ukraine, and with Israel and Palestine.

In January, the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (Japan-U.S. “2+2”) was held in Washington, D.C. in-person for the first time in two years, and both Japan and the U.S. firmly reiterated their commitment to champion a free and open Indo-Pacific region. In January, Prime Minister Kishida, who was visiting Washington, D.C., held a Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting with President Biden. Prime Minister Kishida stated that he will strengthen efforts to realize FOIP, and in response, President Biden reiterated the unwavering U.S. commitment to the region. Based on this, the two leaders concurred that Japan and the U.S. will continue to promote endeavors to realize FOIP. The Joint Statement of the United States and Japan, which was issued as a result of the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting, states that their cooperation today is unprecedented, rooted in a shared vision of FOIP and a peaceful and prosperous world, and guided by their shared values and principles, including the rule of law.

At the Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers’ Meeting held in March, the two ministers confirmed that Japan and the U.S. will remain united and continue to drive efforts toward the realization of FOIP by leveraging cooperation of the G7 and Japan-U.S.-Australia-India (Quad), while building on the outcomes of the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting, the Japan-U.S. “2+2” in January, and other efforts.

At the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting held during the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, Prime Minister Kishida stated that the Japan-U.S. Alliance is the cornerstone of the peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, and that the multilayered cooperation between Japan and the U.S. extends to all fields and is not limited to just security and the economy. In response, President Biden stated that Japan and the U.S. share fundamental values, and that the Alliance is stronger than ever. Furthermore, at the Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers’ Meeting that was also held during the G7 Hiroshima Summit, the two ministers confirmed

that the Japan-U.S. relationship, with the Japan-U.S. Alliance at its core and which serves as the cornerstone of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, has never been stronger, and confirmed that they would continue to cooperate in a variety of fields.

In November, at the APEC Ministerial Meeting in San Francisco, a ministerial meeting of the Japan-U.S. Economic Policy Consultative Committee (the Economic “2+2”) was held, with the two sides discussing two topics: (1) strengthening the rules-based economic order in the Indo-Pacific region, and (2) strengthening economic resilience as well as promoting and protecting critical and emerging technologies. At the APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting that followed, Prime Minister Kishida and President Biden held a Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting, during which Prime Minister Kishida stated that the coordination between Japan and the U.S. is becoming more important than ever with the situation in the Middle East, Ukraine, and the challenges of the Indo-Pacific region including China and North Korea. In response, President Biden stated that the importance of the Japan-U.S. Alliance is higher than ever, and that he would like to further strengthen the coordination between Japan and the U.S.

(Japan’s Efforts on the Issue of Comfort Women)

(See 3(2)B(C) regarding the comfort women issue between Japan and the ROK.)

The Government of Japan has sincerely dealt with the issues of reparations, property and claims pertaining to the World War II, including the comfort women issue, under the San Francisco Peace Treaty, which the Government of Japan concluded with 45 countries, including the U.S., the UK and France, and through other bilateral treaties, agreements and instruments. These issues including those of claims of individuals have already been legally settled with the parties to these treaties, agreements, and instruments.

On this basis, the Government of Japan has actively taken measures to recover the honor of former comfort women and to provide remedies for them. In 1995, the Asian Women’s Fund (AWF) was established with the cooperation of the people and the Government of Japan for the purpose of carrying out atonement and remedy projects for former comfort women. The Government of Japan provided a total of 4.8 billion Japanese yen.

Furthermore, approximately 600 million Japanese yen was donated to the AWF by the people of Japan. The Government of Japan extended maximum cooperation to the AWF, which implemented medical and welfare support projects and provided “atonement money,” to offer realistic relief to former comfort women. As part of the AWF’s projects, “atonement money” (2 million Japanese yen per person), which was funded by donations from Japanese people, was provided to 285 former comfort women (211 in the Philippines, 61 in the ROK, 13 in Taiwan). Moreover, the AWF provided funds in those countries/areas for medical and welfare support funded with contributions by the Government of Japan (3 million Japanese yen per person in the ROK and Taiwan, 1.2 million Japanese yen per person in the Philippines) (for a total of 5 million Japanese yen per person in the ROK and Taiwan, 3.2 million Japanese yen per person in the Philippines). Furthermore, using funds contributed by the Government of Japan, the AWF extended support for projects to promote social welfare services for elderly people in Indonesia as well as projects to help improve the living conditions of former comfort women in the Netherlands.

When the “atonement money” as well as the medical and welfare support were provided to individual former comfort women, then-Prime Ministers (namely, Prime Ministers HASHIMOTO Ryutaro, OBUCHI Keizo, MORI Yoshiro and KOIZUMI Junichiro) sent signed letters expressing their apology and remorse directly to each former comfort woman.

As stated in the Statement by the Prime Minister issued in 2015, Japan will engrave in its heart the past, when the dignity and honor of many women were severely injured during wars in the 20th century. Japan will lead the world in making the 21st century an era in which women’s human rights are not infringed upon.

Despite such sincere efforts by the Government of Japan, there are claims that can hardly be regarded to be based on historical facts, such as allegations of “forceful taking away” of comfort women and “sex slaves” as well as the figures such as “200,000 persons” or “several hundred thousands” for the total number of comfort women.

The Government of Japan’s position regarding these claims is as follows:

“Forceful taking away”

The “forceful taking away” of comfort women by the Japanese military and government authorities could not be confirmed in any of the documents that the Government of Japan was able to identify.

“Sex slaves”

The expression of “sex slaves” contradicts the facts and should not be used. This point was confirmed with the ROK on the occasion of the Japan-ROK Agreement in December 2015 and the expression “sex slaves” is not used in the agreement.

Figures such as “200,000 persons” for the total number of comfort women

The figure “200,000 persons” lacks concrete evidence. As stated in the report of the Government study’s result of August 4, 1993, it is virtually impossible to determine the total number of comfort women as no documents have been found which either indicate the total number or give sufficient ground to establish an estimate.

The Government of Japan has been making efforts to provide clear explanations regarding its sincere efforts and official position in international fora. Specifically, at the United Nations (UN), the Government of Japan has explained its position on a number of occasions such as during the consideration of the Seventh and Eighth Periodic Reports by the Government of Japan based on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in February 2016, the Ninth Periodic Report on the Implementation of the CEDAW submitted in September 2021, and the examination of the Seventh Report of Japan under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in October 2022.

Installations of comfort woman statues⁴ have been observed not only in the ROK but also in some other countries and regions. Such moves are extremely regrettable and incompatible with the position of the

⁴ For the sake of practical convenience, they are referred to as “comfort woman statues.” However, the use of this term is not a reflection of the recognition that these statues correctly embody the reality of those women at that time.

Government of Japan. The Government of Japan will continue reaching out to various people involved in this issue to explain its position.

The below Ministry of Foreign Affairs website details Japan's Efforts on the Issue of Comfort Women.

https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/page22e_000883.html



2 China / Mongolia, etc.

(1) China

A Situation in China

(A) Domestic Affairs

In March, the first session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) was held. Premier Li Keqiang delivered the Report on the Work of the Government, in which he enumerated the issues that China's economy is currently facing, and stated that China will continue "pursuing progress while ensuring stability." He also noted that China has achieved its First Centenary Goal (which was planned to be achieved by the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2021) by eradicating poverty and building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, and that progress had already begun toward the Second Centenary Goal (build a great modern socialist country in all aspects by 2049 which is the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China). The leadership of state institutions for the next five years was also appointed, and General Secretary Xi Jinping was elected to his third term as President of the People's Republic of China.

State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang had been absent from public view since the end of June, and was dismissed from his position as Foreign Minister in late July. Wang Yi, former Foreign Minister and Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, was appointed again. Additionally, State Councilor and Defense Minister Li Shangfu, who had been absent from public view since the end of August, was dismissed from his position as Defense Minister in late October.

In early October, "Xi Jinping Thought on Culture" was proposed for the first time at the National Conference on the Work of Public Communication and Culture. At the 19th CPC National Congress in 2017, General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era," and later, his ideas on the military, economy, ecological civilization, diplomacy, and the rule of law were pointed out as important components of the thought.

In October, the Central Financial Work Conference was held for the first time in six years, and in December the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs was held for the first time in five years. The Central Economic Work Conference was held in December as usual, but a plenary session of the Central Committee, which is typically held in autumn, was not held during 2023.

The international community continues to express high interest in China's human rights situation, including in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and the situation surrounding Hong Kong. Japan believes that it is important that universal values and principles of the international community, such as freedom, respect for fundamental human rights, and the rule of law, are guaranteed in China, and Japan has also taken summit meetings and foreign ministers' meetings as opportunities to directly communicate its position to the Government of China and express serious concern about these situations. The G7 Hiroshima Summit was hosted by Japan, holding the G7 Presidency, in May, and the G7 Hiroshima Leaders' Communiqué and the G7 Japan 2023 Foreign Ministers' Communiqué both concurred on continuing to express concern about the human rights situation in China. Furthermore, at the UN, Japan has been the only member state from Asia to participate in a joint statement by like-minded countries expressing concerns about the human rights situation in China. At the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly in October, the UK, on behalf of 50 countries, delivered a joint statement concerning the serious human rights violations in the XUAR, and Japan participated in the statement. The Government of Japan will continue strongly urging China to take action while also closely cooperating with the international community.

(B) Economy

At the NPC held in March, a firm growth rate target of around 5% was set for 2023, down 0.5% from the previous year's growth rate target. It was stated that China "should enhance the intensity and effectiveness of our proactive fiscal policy," the deficit-to-GDP ratio was relaxed to 3.0% (2.8% in the previous year), and the upper limit for new local government special bonds was relaxed to 3.80 trillion CNY (3.65 trillion CNY in the previous year). As a result, China's full-year real GDP growth rate for 2023 increased by 5.2% year on year, achieving the target, and by quarter, the first quarter (January to March) increased by 4.5% year on year, the second quarter (April to June) increased by 6.3% year on year, the third quarter (July to September) increased by 4.9% year on year, and the fourth quarter (October to December) increased by 5.2% year on year.

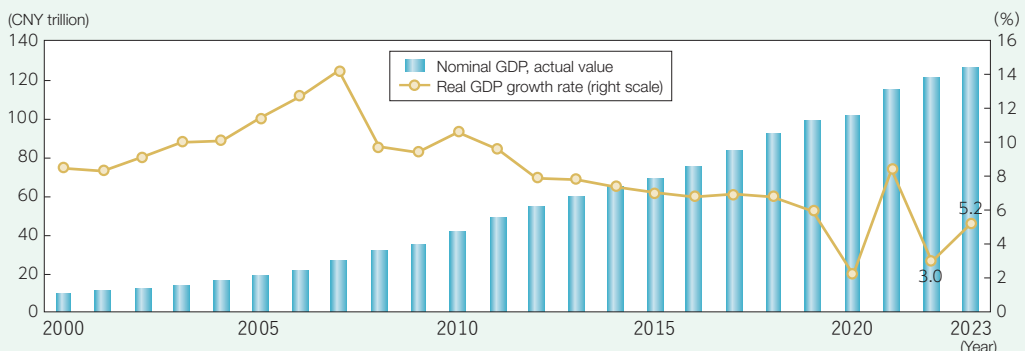
At the end of 2022, the Chinese economy temporarily experienced a strong recovery centered around service consumption as the "zero-COVID" policy, which placed restrictions on outings, was lifted. However, the recovery gradually slowed down due to factors such as the sluggish real estate market and weak external demand attributed to interest rate hikes in the U.S. and Europe. Furthermore, curbs on economic activity due to the "zero-COVID" policy resulted in poor performances of many companies, thereby suppressing employment, and the unemployment rate among young people aged 16 to 24 rose to over 20%.

At a meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC that was held in July, General Secretary Xi Jinping expressed his recognition that "the Chinese economy is facing new

difficulties and challenges, which mainly stem from insufficient domestic demand, difficulties in the operation of some enterprises, risks and hidden dangers in key areas, as well as a grim and complex external environment." On the other hand, he also noted that "The economy has tremendous resilience and potential for development, and its long-term sound fundamentals remain unchanged," and, in terms of economic policy for the second half of the year, indicated that China would continuously implement proactive fiscal policy and maintain a prudent monetary policy. Furthermore, in order to expand demand, policies were outlined to expand consumption by increasing residents' income; to promote the consumption of automobiles, electronic goods, furniture, sports, entertainment, tourism, and so on; and to accelerate the issuance and use of special bonds by local governments. Additionally, for the real estate market, it was pointed out that "to adapt to the great changes in the relationship between supply and demand in China's real estate market, it is imperative to adjust and improve the related policies in a timely manner," and policies such as reductions in down payments and mortgage interest rates were implemented to promote home replacement. Meanwhile, at the sixth session of the Standing Committee of the NPC that was held in October, the issuance of 1 trillion CNY in special government bonds for the purpose of disaster recovery and flood prevention was approved, and the deficit-to-GDP ratio was expected to rise from 3% to 3.8%.

The Central Economic Work Conference held in December positioned 2023 as a "year of economic

China's GDP



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China

recovery and development” after measures that were taken against COVID-19. While pointing out challenges to economic recovery, it was evaluated that, “overall, favorable conditions outweigh unfavorable factors in China’s development, and the fundamental trend of the economic recovery and long-term positive outlook has not changed.”

(C) Response to COVID-19

The nationwide surge of infected and seriously ill patients at the end of 2022 due to the complete elimination of the previous “zero-COVID” policy had already settled down nationwide as of January 2023, and in January China’s National Health Commission announced that “the country’s current wave is coming to an end.”

In May there was a temporary spike in the number of infected individuals, which was seen as a “second wave,” but when compared to the end of 2022 there were no major disruptions such as strains on the medical system or impacts on business activities.

The publication of data by the National Health Commission, such as the number of positive cases, was temporarily suspended after the holidays in May, and since June the data has been published once a month.

(D) Foreign Policy

In 2023, China engaged in in-person diplomatic activities at all levels, including by President Xi Jinping and other high-level officials.

In March, at a press conference at the NPC, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang stated that, “We will follow the guidance of head-of-state diplomacy. In particular, we will ensure the success of the two major diplomatic events that we will host — the first China-Central Asia Summit and the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, and show the dignity of China’s diplomacy.”

In terms of head-of-state diplomacy, President Xi Jinping visited Russia in March as his ninth visit since taking office as President, and held a China-Russia Summit Meeting. In August, he also visited South Africa and attended the BRICS Summit, at which invitations were extended to Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to become new BRICS members. In September, Premier Li Qiang attended the ASEAN-related Summit

Meetings (Jakarta, Indonesia) and the G20 New Delhi Summit (New Delhi, India), and Secretary of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection Li Xi attended the G77+China Summit held in Havana and stated that “China is consistently an inherent member of the Global South.”

As part of its major diplomatic events hosted by China, the first China-Central Asia Summit was held in May in Xi’an, Shanxi Province. President Xi Jinping and the leaders of five Central Asian nations attended the Summit and adopted the Xi’an Declaration of the China-Central Asia Summit. In October, the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was held face-to-face in Beijing for the first time in four years.

Mutual visits between the U.S. and China were temporarily halted after a Chinese high-altitude surveillance balloon violated U.S. airspace in February. High-level exchanges gradually resumed after U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s visit to China in June, such as visits to China by U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kelly in July, as well as multiple meetings between National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee Wang Yi.

On the other hand, in the economic sphere, conflicts in the area of economic security continued to expand as in the previous year. In July, China announced export controls requiring the submission of end-use certificates and other documentation for items related to gallium and germanium. These are important minerals mainly supplied by China. The Biden administration in the U.S. has promoted a de-risking policy toward China to reduce excessive dependence in supply chains and is promoting efforts to strictly control limited advanced technologies. In August, the Biden administration announced an executive order banning investment in China in the areas of semiconductors and microelectronics, quantum information technology, and artificial intelligence if there are national security concerns. Furthermore, in October, revisions were made to the export control measures for advanced semiconductors that were implemented in October 2022, including expanding the items subject to restrictions.

In November, a U.S.-China Summit Meeting was held during the APEC Leader’s Meeting in San Francisco,

U.S., and the two leaders affirmed the resumption of high-level military-to-military communication and cooperation to combat the manufacturing and trafficking of illicit drugs such as fentanyl. Stable U.S.-China relations are important not only for Japan, but also for the entire international community. The future developments will remain to be a matter of interest.

As for the situation in the Middle East, a political dialogue between China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia was held in Beijing in March, and the normalization of diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia was announced.

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian situation since October, Wang Yi, Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee, and Zhai Jun, Special Envoy of the Chinese Government on the Middle East Issue, have been in frequent communication with both Israel and Palestine, as well as with neighboring countries.

China continues to strengthen cooperative frameworks such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), as well as with the emerging market and developing countries represented by the G77, and Japan will closely watch their future impact on China's diplomacy.

(E) Military Affairs and Security

At the 19th CPC National Congress (2017), President Xi Jinping stated that China would transform its armed forces into a world-class military by the middle of this century. Additionally, the communique from the fifth plenary session of the 19th CPC Central Committee, published in October 2020, set the new goal of “securing the realization of the centennial goal by 2027, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA).” Furthermore, at the 20th CPC National Congress in 2022, he reiterated this point, stating that “Achieving the goals for the centenary of the People's Liberation Army in 2027 and more quickly elevating our people's armed forces to world-class standards are strategic tasks for building a modern socialist country in all respects.” Although China's publicly reported defense expenditures have increased about 37-fold over the past 30 years, the breakdown of the budget and the intention behind the increases have not been sufficiently disclosed, and it is

believed that this is only a portion of the amount that China actually spends on military purposes. Amidst such circumstances, China, under its “development strategy of civil-military fusion,” has been extensively and rapidly enhancing the quality and quantity of its military power centered on its nuclear and missile capabilities and naval and air forces. In addition, China is placing importance on ensuring its superiority in new domains of outer space, cyberspace, the electromagnetic spectrum, AI, and unmanned systems, and promoting the modernization of its military through “integrated development of mechanization, informatization and the application of smart technologies.”

In 2023, continuing on from the previous year, Japan has confirmed movements such as navigation by Chinese naval survey vessels in Japan's territorial sea around Yakushima, joint navigations by Chinese and Russian naval vessels around Japan, and joint flights by Chinese and Russian strategic bombers around Japan. In April, China conducted large-scale military exercises in the waters and airspace around Taiwan, with the exercises involving the participation of numerous naval vessels and aircraft, following similar exercises in August 2022. In the South China Sea, China has continued and strengthened its unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force and to render them faits accomplis which goes against the rule of law and openness, as well as its actions to increase regional tensions, such as further militarization of disputed features and coercive actions against coastal States.

In recent years, China has grown to have a great influence on the international community, not only politically and economically, but also militarily. China's current external stance, military activities, and other activities have become a matter of serious concern for Japan and the international community, and present an unprecedented and the greatest strategic challenge in ensuring the peace and security of Japan and the peace and stability of the international community, as well as in strengthening the international order based on the rule of law, to which Japan should respond with its comprehensive national power and in cooperation with its ally, like-minded countries and others. With regard to China's rapid strengthening of its military capabilities and expansion of military activities, Japan will strongly encourage China to improve transparency and

to cooperate constructively with international efforts for arms control, disarmament and other such efforts, in cooperation with its allies, like minded countries and others. Furthermore, in order to nurture a relationship of trust between China and Japan, Japan will enhance communication with China in the security field, including through dialogues and exchanges such as the Japan-China Security Dialogue. Additionally, Japan will promote efforts between Japan and China, including the establishment of frameworks to avoid and prevent unforeseen situations with China, such as the Maritime and Aerial Communication Mechanism between the Japanese and Chinese defense authorities. In this way, Japan, in cooperation with related countries, is strongly urging China to improve its transparency to dispel the concerns of the international community, including Japan, while further promoting mutual trust in Japan-China relations.

B Japan-China Relations

(A) Bilateral Relations: General

Relations with neighboring China are one of Japan's most important bilateral relations, and the two countries have close economic ties and people-to-people and cultural exchanges. While there are various possibilities between Japan and China, there are a number of challenges and concerns, including unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force in the East China Sea and South China Sea as well as the situation surrounding the Senkaku Islands, and intensified military activities around Japan by China, including those conducted in coordination with Russia. Peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is also important. Furthermore, Japan is seriously concerned about the situation in Hong Kong and the human rights situation in the XUAR. At the same time, both Japan and China have a great responsibility for the peace and prosperity of the region and international community. Japan will comprehensively promote a "Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests." At the same time, it is important that both China and Japan promote efforts to build constructive and stable relations, in which Japan maintains and asserts its position, and strongly

calls for responsible actions by China, while continuing dialogue including on issues of concern and cooperating on matters of common interest.

Continuing on from the previous year, in 2023, high level communication, including between leaders, was continuously conducted. Japan and China exchanged opinions on a wide range of topics, from bilateral relations to regional and international affairs, including on a variety of issues between the two countries.

On February 2, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a Japan-China Foreign Ministers' telephone call with Foreign Minister Qin Gang, and stated that he would like to cooperate with Minister Qin in order to realize the broad direction of building a "constructive and stable relationship," which was an important shared recognition between the two leaders, and Minister Qin expressed the same view. On February 18 at the Munich Security Conference, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee Wang Yi.

From April 1 to 2, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited China for the first time by a Japanese Foreign Minister in approximately three years and three months. In addition to meeting with Foreign Minister Qin Gang and Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee Wang Yi, Foreign Minister Hayashi also paid a courtesy call on Premier Li Qiang. During the meeting with Foreign Minister Qin Gang, Foreign Minister Hayashi stated that he hoped that both sides would continue making efforts to put into practice the common understanding shared by the two leaders of building a "constructive and stable Japan-China relationship," and Foreign Minister Qin Gang indicated that he was of the same view. Foreign Minister Hayashi also made a protest against the detention of a Japanese national; expressed Japan's serious concerns about the situation in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, the intensification of Chinese military activities near Japan, and the human rights situation in China; and clearly communicated Japan's position regarding the discharge of ALPS treated water⁵ from TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station into the sea.

⁵ ALPS treated water is water which is processed by devices such as ALPS (Advanced Liquid Processing System) for its radioactive materials other than tritium to surely become below the regulatory standards for safety. ALPS treated water is then sufficiently diluted so that the concentrations of the radioactive materials including tritium is far below the regulatory standards for safety, and then finally discharged into the sea.

On July 14, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee Wang Yi during the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings in Indonesia. During the meeting he clearly reiterated Japan's position regarding the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea and once again called upon China to act based on a scientific standpoint, and also expressed Japan's resolute position on the case of the detention of a Japanese national in China, Japan's grave concerns about issues such as the situation in the East China Sea, and China's increasingly active military activities near Japan.

On September 6, Prime Minister Kishida, who was visiting Jakarta, Indonesia, had a brief conversation with Premier Li Qiang prior to attending the ASEAN Plus Three Summit Meeting. In the conversation, Prime Minister Kishida, referring to the importance of building a "constructive and stable Japan-China relationship," clearly reiterated Japan's position on ALPS treated water.

On November 16, Prime Minister Kishida, who was visiting San Francisco, U.S., to attend the APEC Leaders' Meeting, held a Japan-China Summit Meeting with President Xi Jinping. Prime Minister Kishida stated that 2023 marks the 45th anniversary of the conclusion of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and the People's Republic of China, and that this has provided the people of both countries an opportunity to remember the efforts made by many of their predecessors for the development of friendly relations in a wide range of areas and to look ahead to the future of Japan-China relations. Prime Minister Kishida added that it is important that as major powers that lead the region and the international community, both Japan and China fulfill their responsibilities to contribute to global peace and stability. The two leaders reaffirmed to firmly uphold the principles and common understanding of the four basic documents between Japan and China, and to comprehensively promote a "Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests," and went on to confirm a broad direction of building "constructive and stable Japan-China relations" in order to carve out a new era in Japan-China relations. From that perspective, the two leaders welcomed the successful ministerial dialogue

held in 2023 in the areas of foreign affairs; economy, trade and industry; defense; and environment, and concurred to continue having close communication at all levels, including the summit level. Additionally, Prime Minister Kishida expressed his desire to promote mutually beneficial cooperation in specific areas of economy and people-to-people exchanges. Prime Minister Kishida also expressed his desire to help revitalize Japan-China economic exchanges after ensuring a business environment that guarantees legitimate business activities. The two leaders agreed to hold the Japan-China High-Level Economic Dialogue at an appropriate time in order to achieve concrete results in areas of cooperation, such as green economy, including environment and energy conservation as well as medical care, nursing care, and healthcare; welcomed the launch of the Japan-China Export Control Dialogue; and concurred to strengthen dialogue on macro-economy and confirmed that the geographical scope of Japan-China cooperation is expanding across the world. The two leaders shared the intention to work together as responsible major powers on global challenges such as climate change, to further expand people-to-people exchanges in various areas, and to hold the Japan-China High-Level People-to-People and Cultural Exchange Dialogue at an appropriate time. In addition, Prime Minister Kishida welcomed the launch of the operation in May of a hotline between the Japanese and Chinese defense authorities under the Maritime and Aerial Communication Mechanism, and stated the importance of communication on security matters. Prime Minister Kishida also reiterated his serious concerns regarding the situation in the East China Sea, including the situation surrounding the Senkaku Islands, called for the immediate removal of the buoy installed in Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and reiterated his serious concerns regarding the intensification of China's military activities in areas surrounding Japan, including those coordinated between China and Russia, and other matters. Prime Minister Kishida again stressed that peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is extremely important for Japan and the international community, and, in response to China's assertions on its position regarding Taiwan, stated that Japan's position on Taiwan is based on the Joint Communique of the Government of Japan and the

Government of the People's Republic of China issued on September 29, 1972, and that there is no change in this position. Furthermore, Prime Minister Kishida also reiterated his call for the early release of Japanese nationals detained in China. Prime Minister Kishida once again strongly called for a calm response based on scientific evidence in response to the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea, and reiterated his call for the immediate lifting of import restrictions on Japanese food products. Recognizing that there are differences in their respective positions, both sides shared the view that they will seek to find ways to resolve issues through consultations and dialogue in a constructive manner. The two leaders also discussed international affairs, such as North Korea, including the abductions issue, the Middle East and Ukraine, and confirmed that they will maintain close communication on those issues.

On November 25, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the occasion of the Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Busan, the ROK. The Foreign Ministers shared the intention to work together closely to develop Japan-China relations in line with the broad direction confirmed at the Japan-China Summit Meeting on November 16, and both sides confirmed that they will maintain close communication at all levels. Foreign Minister Kamikawa also strongly called for the immediate lifting of restrictions on imports of Japanese food products, expressed Japan's serious concerns about various outstanding issues such as the situation in the East China Sea, and called for the immediate removal of the buoy installed in Japan's EEZ. The two Ministers also exchanged views on global issues and the situation in North Korea.

In addition, in February the Japan-China Security Dialogue and Japan-China Diplomatic Consultations were held; in April and October various face-to-face meetings were held working level, including the Japan-China High-Level Consultation on Maritime Affairs; and close communication between Japan and China continued at working levels, including frank exchanges of views on various outstanding issues such as the situation in the East China Sea and increased military activity by China.

Furthermore, on the occasion of the IISS Shangri-la Dialogue held in Singapore, a Japan-China Defense

Ministerial Meeting was held between Minister of Defense HAMADA Yasukazu and Chinese State Councilor and Defense Minister Li Shangfu on June 3.

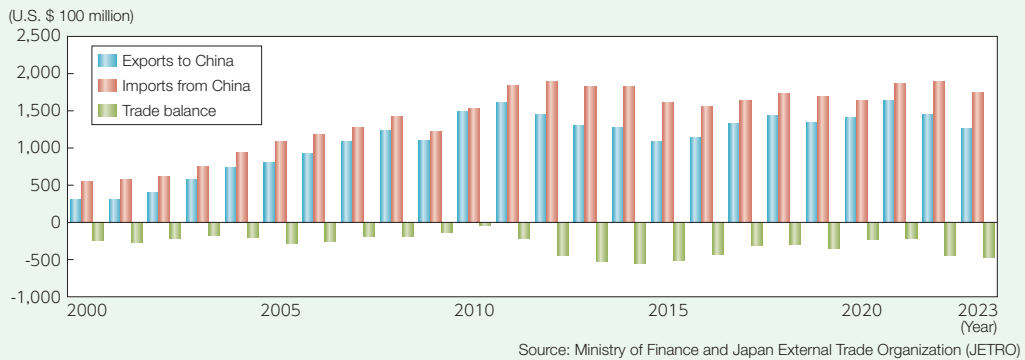
(B) Japan-China Economic Relations

Economic relations between Japan and China, including trade and investment, are very close. In 2023, the total trade between Japan and China (excluding Hong Kong) amounted to about 300.7 billion U.S. dollars (10.4% decrease year on year), and China has been the largest trading partner for Japan for 17 consecutive years.

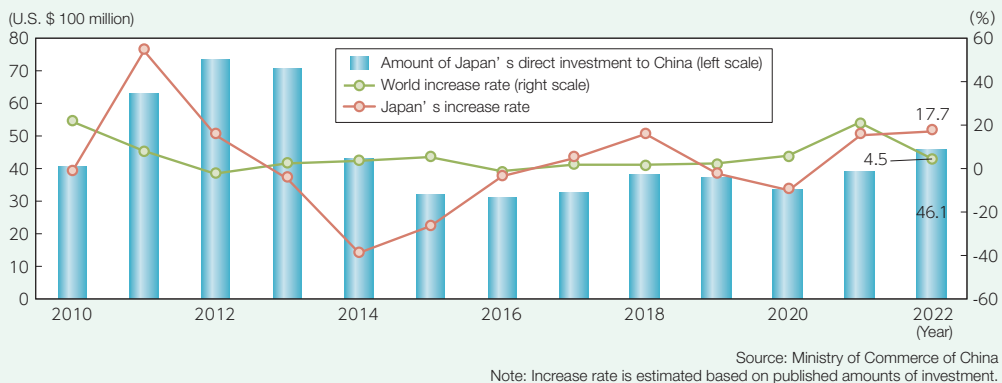
Moreover, according to Chinese statistics, Japan's direct investment in China was about 4.61 billion U.S. dollars (17.7% increase year on year, as estimated from officially published information on investment) in 2022. Japan ranks third in terms of the amount of direct investment to China (Singapore ranks first and the ROK ranks second). According to balance of payment statistics, China is Japan's third largest investment destination after the U.S. and Australia, and is a source of direct investment income that amounts to about 3.2 trillion yen.

Economic dialogue between Japan and China continued as restrictions on travel due to the spread of COVID-19 were eased. A Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in April and a meeting with Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee Wang Yi was held in July, during which it was confirmed that Japan and China would continue close communication at all levels, including at the leader and foreign ministerial levels. At the Japan-China Summit Meeting on November 16, the two leaders agreed to hold the Japan-China High-Level Economic Dialogue at an appropriate time in order to achieve concrete results in areas of cooperation, such as green economy, including environment and energy conservation as well as medical care, nursing care, and healthcare. Additionally, at the Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting on November 25, the two Foreign Ministers concurred on coordinating toward utilizing the Japan-China High-Level Economic Dialogue and the Japan-China High-Level People-to-People and Cultural Exchange Dialogue to be held at an appropriate time, in order to promote bilateral cooperation in areas such as green economy (including environment and energy conservation), as

Japan's Value of Trade with China



Japan's direct investment to China



well as medical care, nursing care, and healthcare and to expand people-to-people exchanges in various areas as agreed by the two leaders during the Japan-China Summit Meeting on November 16. The Japan-China Economic Partnership Consultation was also held online in February. As for public-private economic exchanges, the 9th Japan-China Business Leader and Former High-Level Government Official Dialogue (Japan-China CEO Summit) was held face-to-face in November, with State Minister for Foreign Affairs HORII Iwao from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attending the welcome reception.

(C) Promotion of Mutual Understanding Between Japanese and Chinese People (Current situation of people-to-people exchanges between Japan and China)

On January 8, 2023, China relaxed its border measures, including by eliminating post-entry PCR tests

and quarantine measures, but it announced on January 10 that the issuance of general visas to Japanese citizens would be temporarily suspended in response to border measures announced by Japan at the end of 2022 to address the spread of COVID-19 infections in mainland China. On January 29 China once again resumed issuing general visas, but did not resume issuing some visas (such as tourist visas, which had previously been suspended) and visa exception measures for short-term stays (up to 15 days) in China. On March 15, China resumed issuing various types of visit visas, including tourist visas, but visa exemption measures for short-term stays in China for Japanese nationals remain suspended (as of December 2023).

The number of visitors to Japan from China was approximately 2.425 million in 2023 (provisional value from the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)). Although this value is a significant increase when compared to the approximately 189,000 visitors

in 2022 (finalized value from JNTO), when compared to the 9.594 million visitors in 2019, the flow of people between Japan and China has not yet fully recovered to pre-COVID-19 levels.

A wide range of cultural, economic, educational, and regional exchanges have been built up between Japan and China. 2023 marks the 45th anniversary of the conclusion of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and China, and many events and activities were held to commemorate this event.

On October 23, the effective date of the treaty, the “Reception for the 45th anniversary of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and China” was held in Tokyo, hosted by the Executive Committee for Promotion of Japan-China Exchange (Chair: TOKURA Masakazu, Chairman of the KEIDANREN (Japan Business Federation)), and featured messages exchanged between Prime Minister Kishida and Premier Li Qiang and between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Foreign Minister Wang Yi to commemorate the 45th anniversary of the conclusion of the treaty. On the same day, a commemorative reception was also held in Beijing by the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the China-Japan Friendship Association.

As for youth exchange programs for the next generation, with COVID-19 continuing to subside, for the first time in about three years cross-border travel is being resumed and face-to-face exchange programs are being held. It is hoped that exchange programs such as Japan’s Friendship Ties Program “JENESYS” will promote mutual understanding and understanding of Japan between students and researchers from both countries.

(D) Specific Pending Issues

(Situation Surrounding the East China Sea)

In the East China Sea, China Coast Guard vessels continue to intrude into the Japanese territorial sea around the Senkaku Islands. The Chinese military has also been rapidly expanding and increasing its activities in quality and quantity in the sea and in the airspace over the East China Sea.

The Senkaku Islands are indisputably an inherent territory of Japan in light of historical facts and based upon international law. Indeed, the Senkaku Islands are under the valid control of Japan. Thus, there exists no issue of territorial sovereignty to be resolved concerning the Senkaku Islands. From 1895, when the Senkaku Islands were incorporated into Japanese territory by lawful means under international law, until the 1970s, when the islands became the focus of attention after it was suggested that there might be oil reserves in the East China Sea, China had not raised any objections to Japan’s sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands. Moreover, China has never explained why it had not expressed objections until then. Subsequently, in 2008, vessels belonging to China’s State Oceanic Administration intruded into Japanese territorial sea surrounding the Senkaku Islands for the first time.⁶

During 2023, 34 incidents were recorded in which China Coast Guard vessels intruded into the Japanese territorial sea surrounding the Senkaku Islands (there were 28 incidents in 2022 and 34 incidents in 2021), and the number of confirmed days in 2023 in which China Coast Guard vessels navigated the contiguous zone around the Senkaku Islands reached a record high of 352 days. Furthermore, since May 2020, Chinese Coast Guard vessels have intruded into the Japanese territorial sea of the Senkaku Islands and there have been incidents in which China Coast Guard vessels frequently attempt to approach Japanese fishing boats in those waters, and the situation remains severe, as evidenced by an incident associated with China’s such attempts that occurred in April 2023, in which an intrusion into Japan’s territorial sea lasted more than 80 hours, the longest ever recorded. The activities of the China Coast Guard vessels, which make their own assertions in Japan’s territorial sea around the Senkaku Islands, are in violation of international law, and, in response to China’s such unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, through diplomatic routes the Government of Japan has repeatedly lodged strong protests, has called for the prompt withdrawal of Chinese vessels from Japan’s territorial sea, and has demanded

⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs website detailing the position of the Government of Japan on the Senkaku Islands:
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/index.html>



that such incidents be prevented from reoccurring. With the determination to defend Japan's territory as well as territorial sea and airspace, Japan will continue to take a calm and resolute approach to the situation.

Chinese naval vessels and aircrafts have also been accelerating their activities in the sea and airspace around Japan, including in the East China Sea. In 2023, continuing on from the previous year, Japan confirmed multiple instances in which Chinese naval survey ships navigated Japanese territorial sea around Yakushima. Joint flights by Chinese and Russian strategic bombers were confirmed in June and December, and continuing on from the previous year, joint navigation by Chinese and Russian vessels was confirmed from July to August. On multiple occasions Chinese naval vessels were also confirmed to be navigating waters surrounding Japan including in those around the Senkaku Islands. Based on past movements of Chinese naval vessels in the waters surrounding Japan, the Government of Japan has strong concerns about the navigation of Chinese naval vessels in Japanese territorial sea. Furthermore, because the joint actions of Chinese and Russian militaries in the vicinity of Japan are a serious concern for Japan's security, Japan has appropriately raised objections with the Chinese side regarding each incident.

Chinese aircraft activity, including by unmanned aerial vehicles, continues to occur, and the number of times the Air Self-Defense Force has had to scramble jets in response to Chinese military aircrafts since autumn 2012 has remained high. In response to these recent activities by the Chinese military, Japan has been raising the issues through diplomatic routes.

China has been continuing its unilateral activities to develop natural resources while the EEZ and the continental shelf between Japan and China in the East China Sea remain pending delimitation. In addition to the four structures built by the Chinese side prior to the "2008 Agreement" on resource development in the East China Sea, the Government of Japan has confirmed 12 new structures built between June 2013 and May 2016 that are west of the geographical equidistance line and two new structures that have been built since May 2022, for a total of 18 structures have been installed in 16 locations so far (at two of the 16 locations, two structures have been integrated into a single structure). Such unilateral development activities are

extremely regrettable, and every time such moves by China are detected, Japan has strongly requested China to cease its unilateral development and to immediately resume negotiations for the conclusion of international agreements based on the implementation of the "2008 Agreement" regarding the development of natural resources in the East China Sea. At the summit meeting between Prime Minister Abe and President Xi Jinping in June 2019, the two leaders shared the view of promoting and implementing the "2008 Agreement" regarding resource development in order to achieve the goal of making the East China Sea a "Sea of Peace, Cooperation and Friendship," and at the Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in April 2023, the two Foreign Ministers also shared the view on promoting and implementing the "2008 Agreement" regarding resource development in the East China Sea.

In recent years numerous activities by China to carry out maritime surveys in and around Japan's EEZ, including in the East China Sea, without obtaining Japan's approval, have also continued, and each time this happens Japan raises objections with the Chinese side through diplomatic routes.

Additionally, in July 2023, the existence of a buoy considered to have been installed by China was confirmed to be in Japan's EEZ in the East China Sea. The Government of Japan has utilized various opportunities at all levels, including at the Japan-China Summit Meeting and Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting in November, to lodge protests against China, and has repeatedly and strongly called for the immediate removal of the buoy.

In order to appropriately deal with these maritime and security concerns, both Japan and China have been promoting dialogue and exchanges between the authorities concerned. For example, in June 2018 the defense authorities of Japan and China began operation of the Maritime and Aerial Communication Mechanism between the Japanese and Chinese defense authorities, which is highly significant for promoting mutual understanding between both countries and avoiding and preventing accidental collisions, and under the Mechanism the operation of the Hotline between Japanese and Chinese Defense Authorities began in May 2023.



Chinese maritime structures confirmed to have been built near the geographical equidistant line between Japan and China (Photo: Ministry of Defense)
For details, see https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/c_m1/page3e_000356.html



As Japan has stated on repeated occasions, including at Japan-China Summit Meetings, true improvement in Japan-China relations cannot be achieved without stability in the East China Sea. It is highly meaningful from the perspective of building trust and bolstering cooperation for diplomats from both countries to directly and frankly exchange opinions, such as at the Japan-China High-Level Consultation on Maritime Affairs or other discussions between related authorities of both countries. The Government of Japan will continue asserting Japan's position on individual issues through steady dialogue and bolstering of communication.

(Yamato Bank)

In the waters around the Yamato Bank in the Sea of Japan, illegal fishing by Chinese fishing vessels was still confirmed in 2023. Utilizing opportunities such as Japan-China High-Level Consultation on Maritime Affairs, Japan has, at various levels, repeatedly conveyed its concerns and has strongly urged China to take effective steps, including strengthening measures such as providing guidance to those engaged in fishing.

(Japanese Food Import Restrictions Issue)

Regarding the import restrictions that China placed on food products from Japan, Japan has been strongly and repeatedly urging China to immediately remove these restrictions at various levels, including at the leader and foreign ministerial levels.

On August 24, in response to the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea, the Government of China announced a temporary suspension of all imports of Japanese marine products. China's introduction of new measures in addition to existing import restrictions is a response that is not based on scientific evidence, and Japan has seized various opportunities at all levels, including at the leader and foreign ministerial levels, to call for the immediate removal of these measures. Furthermore, in response to China's notification at the World Trade Organization (WTO) based on the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) the Government of Japan has submitted its counterargument in writing to the WTO that refutes China's claims, and has also explained Japan's position at related committees, including at the SPS Committee. Furthermore, the Government of Japan has requested that the Government of China hold discussions based on the provisions of the SPS Agreement and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement, and is urging China to respond to these discussions in accordance with its obligations under the agreements.

Japan is strongly urging China to engage in discussions based on scientific evidence, and will continue utilizing every opportunity to urge China to immediately remove import restrictions on Japanese food products.

(Cases of Detainment of Japanese Nationals)

In regard to successive cases of detainment of Japanese nationals, the Government of Japan has urged early release of Japanese detainees on various occasions between Japan and China, including summit and foreign ministers' meetings, and, so far, five Japanese nationals have been released before being arrested and six Japanese nationals have returned to Japan after serving their sentences. In March 2023, another Japanese national was detained in Beijing. The Government of Japan has been strongly requesting, at all levels and on every occasion, including at the leader and foreign ministerial levels and at the Japan-China Summit Meeting and Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting, that the Government of China provide early releases; transparency in law enforcement and judicial processes, including with respect to China's revised Counter-Espionage Law; and proper safeguards for the rights of Japanese nationals, as well as ensuring impartial justice and humane treatment, and will continue to tenaciously persevere in such efforts. Additionally, from the perspective of protecting Japanese nationals, the Government of Japan is providing as much support as possible, including consular visits and contact with family members.

In response to these successive cases of Japanese nationals being detained, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the Embassy of Japan in China have issued warnings on their websites urging Japanese residents to be aware that acts deemed to "endanger national security" are subject to investigation, and that they may not only be forced to spend long periods of time in detention, but may also face penalties such as imprisonment if convicted. Additionally, in response to the revised Counter-Espionage Law taking effect in July 2023, the content of the warning on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Overseas Safety website has been updated to provide more detailed and specific warnings.

(Abandoned Chemical Weapons Issue)

The Government of Japan, in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), has been steadily working on the destruction of chemical weapons abandoned by the former Japanese military forces in China. In 2023, Japan carried out the excavation, and recovery, and destruction operations of

abandoned chemical weapons (ACW) in Haerbaling District, Dunhua City, Jilin Province, and also carried out the destruction operation of ACW in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province. Additionally, Japan also carried out field surveys and the excavation and recovery operations of ACW in various other parts of China (as of December 2023, approximately 88,000 ACW have been destroyed).

(2) Taiwan

A Domestic Affairs and Economy

Taiwan has presidential and legislative elections every four years, and they were held on January 13, 2024. The ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) suffered a significant defeat in the local elections held in November 2022, but in the 2024 presidential election, Vice President Lai Ching-te, the DPP's official candidate, was elected with 40.05% of the vote. The difference between Lai Ching-te and the second-place candidate from the opposition Kuomintang (KMT) party was 6.56 points. In the legislative elections that were held at the same time, the DPP lost 11 seats and fell to 51 seats, down from the 62 seats it held before the election, and making it the second largest party in the Legislative Yuan (113 seats in total). The KMT was the leading party in the legislative elections, increasing by 15 seats to 52 seats, and the Taiwan People's Party (TPP) a new party that was formed in 2019, increased by 3 seats to 8 seats, but no party gained a majority of the seats. As such, the TPP has become the deciding vote in the Legislative Yuan (when two major parties are competing and neither can control a majority, the minority party effectively holds the decision-making power).

Since the second half of 2022, Taiwan's economic growth rate has declined due to inflationary pressures and sluggish external demand caused by the U.S.-China conflict and by Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and Taiwan's annual real GDP growth rate for 2023 is forecast to be only +1.61%.

B Cross-strait Relations and External Relations

From March 29 to April 7, 2023, President Tsai Ing-wen visited Guatemala and Belize in Central America, which have diplomatic relations with Taiwan, stopping in New York, the U.S. on the way there and in Los

Angeles on the way back. In Los Angeles, she held a meeting at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library with bipartisan members of the U.S. Congress, which was hosted by Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy. In response, China announced sanctions, including a ban on visits to China, against Representative of Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the U.S. Bi-khim Hsiao representatives of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, and others, and also conducted military exercises near Taiwan from April 8 to 10. On April 5, a naval fleet including the aircraft carrier *Shandong* made its way from the South China Sea to the Western Pacific Ocean.

On March 26, just before President Tsai Ing-wen's overseas trip, the Central American country of Honduras severed diplomatic relations with Taiwan and established diplomatic relations with China.

From August 12 to 18, Vice President Lai Ching-te visited Paraguay, a South American country that has diplomatic relations with Taiwan, and President Santiago Peña Palacios said that "During my five-year term, Paraguay will stand with Taiwan." Vice President Lai Ching-te did not hold any meetings with dignitaries during his stops in New York on the way out or in San Francisco on the way back. In response, China conducted military exercises around Taiwan on August 19. Furthermore, China announced anti-dumping duties on Taiwanese polycarbonates on August 15, and a suspension of imports of Taiwanese mangoes on August 21.

In September, Taiwan held a ceremony to launch its first domestically manufactured submarine. In addition, Taiwan's defense budget for FY2024 was a record high of 606.8 billion NTD, and Taiwan has been making efforts to strengthen deterrence, including reverting the compulsory military service period from four months to one year, starting from 2024.

On December 21, China announced that Taiwan's trade restrictions with China violate the Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), and that from January 1, 2024, China was suspending the application of the tax rates stipulated in the ECFA for 12 Taiwanese products, including paraxylene.

In December, just before Taiwan's presidential election, China also rescinded preferential tariffs on certain chemical imports from Taiwan under the ECFA.

In response to the DPP candidate Lai Ching-te's election in the January 2024 presidential election, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi commented that, "The outcome of the recent leadership election in the Taiwan region also won't change the prevailing consensus of the international community on adhering to the 'one-China principle'" and that "China will eventually achieve complete reunification." The State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, which is in charge of Taiwan, released a statement saying, "the results reveal that the DPP cannot represent the mainstream public opinion on the island." Immediately after the election, on January 15, the Pacific Island country of Nauru severed diplomatic relations with Taiwan, bringing the total number of countries that recognize Taiwan to 12.

Peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait are important not only for the security of Japan, but also for the stability of the entire international community. This was reaffirmed at the G7 Hiroshima Summit, and the G7 leaders concurred to call for a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues.

In 2023, active visits to Taiwan by legislative members and others from various countries continued, particularly from Europe and the U.S., with 61 groups making visits, which is 31 more than in 2022.

Taiwan was an observer at the World Health Organization (WHO) General Assembly from 2009 to 2016, but has not been able to participate since 2017. Japan has consistently asserted that there should be no geographical gap in responding to international health issues. From this perspective, Japan has consistently supported Taiwan's participation as an observer to the WHO General Assembly.

C Japan-Taiwan Relations

For Japan, Taiwan is an extremely important partner and a valuable friend, with which it shares fundamental values and principles such as freedom, democracy, basic human rights and the rule of law, and enjoys close economic relations and people-to-people exchanges. The relations between Japan and Taiwan are maintained on the basis of working relations at the non-governmental level in accordance with the 1972 Joint Communiqué between Japan and China. Citizen sentiment in both Japan and Taiwan is generally positive, and, 42 members from the Japan-ROC Diet Members'

Consultative Council delegation attended the National Day Celebration events held in Taipei on October 10, and for the second consecutive year, a marching band from a Japanese high school was invited as a guest performer. There have also been active visits by dignitaries, such as the when the Vice Premier of the Executive Yuan visited Japan in June for the first time in 29 years for an economic conference and when Vice-President of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan ASO Taro visited Taiwan in August to attend a symposium. In 2023, a total of 4.2 million people traveled from Taiwan to Japan.

Taiwan has been responding to Japan's discharge of ALPS treated water based on scientific evidence. On the other hand, import restriction measures such as import suspensions and the requirement to submit certificates of some Japanese foods still remain in place. Japan continues to persistently urge Taiwan to lift these restrictions as soon as possible based on scientific evidence.

In March, the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association and the Taiwan-Japan Relations Association signed a "Memorandum of Understanding on Exchange and Cooperation in the Legal and Justice Fields," bringing the total number of agreements between the two associations to 64.

(3) Mongolia

A Domestic Affairs

In order to strengthen overall coordination functions related to long-term development plans, the Oyun-Erdene Administration worked on strengthening the system for promoting the "New Recovery Policy," a policy package aimed at achieving post-COVID-19 economic independence; including by positioning the Minister of Economy and Development at the Deputy Prime Minister level, and creating a ministerial post in charge of "Border Port Recovery" (issues on development of infrastructure to serve as bases for imports and exports, etc.), which is one of the pillars of that Policy. Additionally, in response to frequent demonstrations in 2022 including those over the mismanagement scandal by the Development Bank of Mongolia and the allegations of illegal exports at the Tavan Tolgoi coal mine, the administration designated 2023 as the "Year of Fighting against Corruption." However, it resulted

in the resignation of some ministers and multiple incumbent legislators due to coal corruption allegations. In addition, the allegations of corruption in the procurement of buses for the capital city Ulaanbaatar was raised, which led to the resignation of the mayor of Ulaanbaatar and the Minister in Charge of Capital Affairs.

In May a constitutional amendment bill was passed to change the number of seats in the State Great Hural (Parliament) and the electoral system (to take effect in January 2024); a proportional representation system was introduced in addition to the electoral district system for the next general election in 2024; and the number of seats of the State Great Hural, which had been maintained at 76 seats since its establishment in 1992, was significantly expanded to 126 seats in total, including 78 constituency seats and 48 proportional representation seats.

B Foreign Policy

Mongolia, which is situated between China and Russia and increasingly dependent on both countries in terms of economy and energy, has long pursued a foreign policy of maintaining good relations with both countries as a top priority while at the same time maintaining a balance by strengthening relations with other countries, including Japan and Western countries, which it positions as its "Third Neighbors."

In 2023, numerous dignitaries visited Mongolia, including French President Emmanuel Macron (May) and His Holiness Pope Francis (September), while President U. Khurelsukh, Prime Minister L. Oyun-Erdene, and Foreign Minister B. Battsetseg, each actively visited foreign countries and engaged in active dignitary diplomacy. Furthermore, in June, Foreign Minister Battsetseg hosted a Female Foreign Ministers' Meeting in the capital Ulaanbaatar, which the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, Indonesia, and other countries attended.

As for Mongolia's relations with China, Foreign Minister Battsetseg (May, November), Prime Minister Oyun-Erdene (June), and President Khurelsukh (October for the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, accompanied by Foreign Minister Battsetseg) visited China. As for Mongolia's relations with Russia, Chairman of the State Great

Hural G. Zandanshatar visited Russia (June), and from Russia Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Gordeyev Alexey Vasilievich (January), Chairman of the State Duma Volodin Vyacheslav Victorovich (September), and Deputy Prime Minister Viktoria Abramchenko (October) visited Mongolia. Furthermore, Mongolia continued efforts to maintain relations with both neighboring countries, including by holding multiple summit meetings with both China and Russia during international conferences.

C Economy

In 2023, Mongolia's economy continued on a recovery trend due to expansion of external demand from China and accompanying expansion of domestic demand. Export growth was especially driven by Chinese demand for mineral resources including coal. On the other hand, industries other than mining recovered in a slow pace. In particular, the production of livestock and agricultural products experienced negative growth due to poor weather from winter to spring. Mongolia's inflation rate, being slightly better than in 2022, also continued to rise at 10.4%, which has slowed the economic recovery. Mongolia's economic growth rate from July to September was 6.9% year on year. In addition, Mongolia's trade value for 2023 increased by 12.1% in terms of exports and increased by 6.3% in terms of imports when compared to the previous year.

D Japan-Mongolia Relations

In regard to relations with Japan, high-level exchanges and dialogue continued in 2023.

Chairman of the State Great Hural Zandanshatar visited Japan at the invitation of the House of Councilors in March; a meeting between Foreign Minister Hayashi and Foreign Minister Battsetseg was held at the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings in July; and a Summit Meeting was held between Prime Minister Kishida and President Khurelsukh at the UN General Assembly High-level Week in September. The two countries confirmed steady progress being made in cooperation projects in various sectors based on the "Japan-Mongolia Action Plan (2022-2031)," which was issued on occasion of President Khurelsukh's visit to Japan in 2022.

Specifically, as part of cooperation with Mongolia's "One Billion Trees" initiative, which President Khurelsukh proposed and has been implementing as part of measures to combat climate change and desertification, Japan has launched the first project under its plan of afforestation up to around 50,000 trees over five years in Mongolia. In addition, the second "Japan-Mongolia Student Forum" (a three-day online study session and a two-night, three-day exchange camp), which was launched on the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Mongolia, was held in the period from July to October, and students who will be responsible for the next generation of bilateral relations deepened mutual understanding and exchanges.

3 Korean Peninsula

(1) North Korea (including the abductions issue)

The Government of Japan has been taking various initiatives based on its basic policy of seeking to normalize its relations with North Korea through comprehensively resolving outstanding issues of concern, such as the abductions, nuclear and missile issues, as well as settlement of the unfortunate past in accordance with the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration of September 2002. In 2023, North Korea repeatedly conducted launches of ballistic missiles and others, including five intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM)-class ballistic missiles and a launch using ballistic missile technology for the purpose of satellite launch. This series of actions by North Korea constitutes a grave and imminent threat to Japan's national security and poses a clear and serious challenge to the region and the international community, and are totally unacceptable. Japan will continue to ensure the full implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions by the international community and seek the complete dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs while also cooperating with the international community, including the U.S. and the Republic of Korea (ROK). The abductions issue is a humanitarian and time sensitive-issue with no time to spare. Japan continues to call

on North Korea to implement the May 2014 Japan-North Korea agreement (the agreement in Stockholm)⁷ and will continue to make the utmost efforts to realize the return of all abductees at the earliest possible date, while working closely with the international community, including the U.S. and the ROK.

A North Korea Nuclear and Missile Issues

(A) Recent Trends in North Korea Nuclear and Missile Issues

North Korea has not carried out the dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner, in accordance with the series of relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

The Sixth Enlarged Plenary Meeting of the 8th Central Committee of the Workers Party of Korea (WPK) was held at the end of December 2022, and it was reported that North Korean President of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong-un announced a work plan for 2023 and mentioned “the mass-producing of tactical nuclear weapons” and “an exponential increase of the country’s nuclear arsenal.” In February 2023, a military parade celebrating the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Korean People’s Army was held and it was reported that a “tactical missile column,” a “long-range cruise missile column,” a “tactical nuclear-armed unit” and an “intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) column” were presented. The Ninth Session of the 14th Supreme People’s Assembly that was held in September where a constitutional amendment was adopted clearly stating that North Korea “develops highly nuclear weapons,” and President Kim was reported to have stated that, given “the present situation, in which the structure of the ‘new Cold War’ is being materialized on a global scale” “by the reactionary imperialist forces,” “we must neither change nor concede the present position of our country as a nuclear weapon state, but, on the contrary, continue to further strengthen the nuclear force.”

In 2023, North Korea launched ballistic missiles 18 times (at least 25 launches). A ballistic missile was launched on January 1st, and on February 18 an ICBM-class ballistic missile is estimated to have

fallen within Japan’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ), approximately 200 kilometers west of Oshima-Oshima Island, Hokkaido. North Korea subsequently launched a ballistic missile on February 20, an ICBM-class ballistic missile which it announced as the “Hwasong-17” on March 16, and ballistic missiles on March 19 and March 27. On April 13, it launched an ICBM-class ballistic missile that appears to use a new type of solid-fuel propulsion system and which was reported to have been the “first test launch” of the “Hwasong-18.”

On May 29, North Korea notified that it would launch a satellite between May 31 and June 11, and on May 31 North Korea conducted a launch using ballistic missile technology. On the same day, it was announced that the “Malligyong-1 military reconnaissance satellite” had been launched and that it “lost propulsion and crashed.”

On June 15, two ballistic missiles were launched, and both were estimated to have fallen within Japan’s EEZ, approximately 250 kilometers north-northwest of Hegura Island, Ishikawa Prefecture. On July 12, it launched an ICBM-class ballistic missile once again which it announced as “Hwasong-18,” and ballistic missiles were also launched on July 19 and July 24.

On August 22, North Korea notified that it would launch a satellite between August 24 and August 31. On August 24 it conducted a “launch of the “Malligyong-1” military reconnaissance satellite” using ballistic missile technology, flying over the Japanese archipelago, but on the same day it was announced that the launch “failed due to an error in the emergency blasting system during the third-stage flight.” Ballistic missiles were also launched on August 30 and September 13.

On November 21, North Korea notified that it would launch a satellite between November 22 and December 1, but carried out the launch on November 21 using ballistic missile technology, and on November 22, the following day, announced that they had “accurately placed reconnaissance satellite ‘Malligyong-1’ into orbit.”

North Korea also launched a ballistic missile on December 17, and the following day, on December

⁷ In May 2014, Japan-North Korea Intergovernmental Consultations were held in Stockholm, Sweden. North Korea promised to conduct a comprehensive and full-scale investigation on all Japanese nationals, including abductees.

18, it launched an ICBM-class ballistic missile which it announced as the “Hwasong-18.”

Faced with these series of violations of Security Council resolutions, Japan, as a member of the Security Council, has been diligently working to take a resolute action at the Security Council in cooperation with the U.S. and other countries, but the Security Council has not been able to take a unified action due to the reluctance of some countries.

Under these circumstances, Japan has been working together with like-minded countries in encouraging relevant countries to enhance the effective implementation of sanctions based on existing Security Council resolutions.

On March 17, September 1, and December 1, the Government of Japan took further measures against North Korea, additionally designating a total of 7 entities and 12 individuals involved in North Korea’s nuclear and missile development as being subject to asset freezes and other measures (as a result, a total of 144 entities and 133 individuals were designated as of the end of December 2023).

With regard to North Korea’s nuclear activities, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General’s report in August stated that further activity had been observed at the Adit 3 tunnel in the nuclear test site near Punggye-ri, and pointed out that several buildings had been constructed, including in the test site support area. On December 21, the IAEA Director General also pointed out that North Korea’s light water reactor at Yongbyon had been shown to have reached criticality.

(B) Initiatives by Japan and Cooperation with the International Community

The repeated launches of ballistic missiles and others by North Korea are serious challenges not only to Japan, but also to the international community, and are totally unacceptable. It is crucial that the international community makes concerted efforts to fully implement the UN Security Council resolutions for the dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner by North Korea. Japan has confirmed these points at meetings with the leaders and foreign ministers of various countries. On March 19, July 13,

and December 19, G7 Foreign Ministers’ Statements on the launch of an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile by North Korea were released, and on August 24 and November 22, G7 Foreign Ministers’ Statements on the launch using ballistic missile technology by North Korea were released.

In addition, recognizing that the collaboration among Japan, the U.S., and the ROK is essential for regional peace and stability beyond issues related to North Korea, Japan, the U.S., and the ROK have been enhancing collaboration at multiple levels, through holding meetings among leaders, Foreign Ministers, Vice-Ministers, and Special Representatives to the Six-Party Talks. At the leaders’ level, an exchange of views among Japan-U.S.-ROK leaders was held on May 21 on the occasion of the G7 Hiroshima Summit, and subsequently on August 18, the first-ever stand-alone Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting was held at Camp David in the U.S. (See the Special Feature on page 37). Furthermore, an informal talk among Japan-U.S.-ROK leaders was held on November on the occasion of the APEC Leaders’ Meeting in San Francisco, U.S. At the foreign ministerial level, Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers’ Meetings were held on February 18 in Munich, Germany on the occasion of the Munich Security Conference, and on July 14 in Jakarta, Indonesia on the occasion of the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers’ Meetings. In both meetings, North Korea’s launches of an ICBM-class ballistic missile were strongly condemned and a Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers’ Joint Statement was released after the July meeting. On September 22, a Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers’ informal talk was held in New York, U.S. on the occasion of the UN General Assembly, and on November 14, a Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers’ Meeting was held in San Francisco, U.S. on the occasion of the APEC Ministerial Meeting. At the vice-ministerial level as well, a Japan-U.S.-ROK vice foreign ministerial meeting was held on February 13 in Washington, D.C., U.S., and after the meeting a joint statement was released. In addition, at the level of the Special Representatives to the Six-Party Talks, trilateral meetings among Japan, the U.S., and the ROK were held in Seoul, ROK on April 7, in Karuizawa, Japan on July 20, and in Jakarta, Indonesia on October 17, and a Japan-U.S.-ROK joint statement was released after the talks in April.

As part of the Japan Coast Guard's patrolling activities and the Self-Defense Forces' surveillance operations, Japan has been conducting information gathering on the activities of vessels suspected to be violating the UN Security Council resolutions. When the Government of Japan finds activities strongly suspected to be violating the UN Security Council resolutions, including ship-to-ship transfers⁸ with North Korean vessels, measures have been taken, such as notification to the UN Security Council 1718 Sanctions Committee and other bodies, sharing of information with related countries, and releasing of information to the public. Aircraft of Australia, Canada, and France, in addition to U.S. aircraft, have, based on the UN Status of Forces Agreement, used U.S. military facilities and areas in Japan to engage in surveillance operations against illicit maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers. Furthermore, monitoring and surveillance activities were conducted in the waters surrounding Japan, including the East China Sea, by naval vessels such as multiple vessels of the U.S. Navy, the UK Royal Navy offshore patrol vessel HMS *Spey*, the French Navy frigate *Prairial*, the Royal Canadian Navy frigates HMCS *Montréal* and HMCS *Vancouver*, and the Royal Australian Navy frigates HMAS *Anzac* and HMAS *Toowoomba*. From the perspective of further deepening the multinational cooperation, Japan considers it significant that concerned countries are sharing information and coordinating efforts to ensure that UN Security Council resolutions are implemented fully and effectively.

B The Abductions Issue and Japan-North Korea Relations

(A) Basic Position on the Abductions Issue

To date, the Government of Japan has identified 12 separate incidents, involving a total of 17 Japanese abductees, 12 of whom have not yet returned home. North Korea claims that 8 of these 12 abductees have died and that it is unable to confirm that the other 4 ever entered its territory, but as no convincing explanation of this claim has been provided, Japan continues to work toward the resolution of this issue on the

assumption that all of the abductees whose whereabouts are unknown are still alive. As well as being a critical issue concerning the sovereignty of Japan and the lives and safety of Japanese citizens, abductions by North Korea constitute a universal issue among the international community as a violation of basic human rights. In addition, the abductions issue is a humanitarian issue with a time constraint. With not just the abductees themselves, but also their families having reached an advanced age, Japan continues to work toward the resolution of this issue with a determination to "never give up." Based on the basic recognition that the normalization of its relations with North Korea is impossible without resolving the abductions issue, Japan has positioned its resolution as the most important issue. Accordingly, Japan has strongly urged North Korea to provide a full account of all the abduction cases, to hand over the perpetrators to Japan, and to ensure the safety of all abductees and their immediate return to Japan, irrespective of whether the abductees are officially identified. In January 2024, Prime Minister Kishida gave a policy speech where he stated: "With the aging of the families of abductees, the abductions issue, which is a top priority for my administration, is a humanitarian and time sensitive issue with no time to spare. North Korea's nuclear and missile development is totally unacceptable. I would like to pursue high-level talks under my direct supervision toward holding a summit meeting with President Kim Jong-un, in order to realize the return of all abductees at the earliest possible date and thereby bring the relations between Japan and North Korea to new heights, as well as to resolve the outstanding issues of concern in accordance with the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration."

(B) Initiatives by Japan

Following the nuclear test by North Korea in January 2016 and the launch of the ballistic missile in the following month, which North Korea purported to be a "satellite," Japan announced its autonomous measures against North Korea in February 2016. In response, North Korea unilaterally announced that it would completely stop the investigations on all Japanese

⁸ In this context, "ship-to-ship transfers" refers to the transfers to or from North Korea-flagged vessels of any goods or items at sea, which UN Security Council resolution 2375 (adopted in September 2017) prohibits the UN member states from facilitating or engaging in.

abductees and dissolve the Special Investigation Committee. Japan lodged a serious protest against North Korea, conveyed its intention of not abandoning the agreement in Stockholm, and strongly demanded that North Korea implement the agreement and return all the abductees home at the earliest possible date.

(C) Japan-North Korea Relations

During the reception of the PyeongChang Olympic Winter Games Opening Ceremony in February 2018, Prime Minister Abe brought up the abductions, nuclear and missile issues and conveyed Japan's basic position to Kim Yong Nam, President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of North Korea. Prime Minister Abe strongly urged North Korea to resolve the abductions issue, especially the return of all abductees to Japan. In September, Foreign Minister Kono held a meeting with the North Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs Ri Yong Ho at the UN headquarters. In September 2023, Prime Minister Kishida addressed the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, declaring: "I would like to hold high-level talks under my direct supervision to realize a summit meeting at an early time" with President Kim.

(D) Cooperation with the International Community

In order to resolve the abductions issue, it is essential for Japan not only to proactively urge North Korea, but also to gain understanding and support from other countries regarding the importance of resolving the abductions issue. Japan has taken all possible diplomatic opportunities to raise the abductions issue, including at summit meetings, foreign ministers' meetings and international conferences such as the G7 Summit. At the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, Japan confirmed with G7 leaders that they would continue to closely work together in dealing with North Korea, including on the abductions issue. Additionally, at the Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting on August 18, President Joseph Biden and President Yoon Suk Yeol reaffirmed their support for the immediate resolution of the abductions issue, and the Japan-U.S.-ROK Joint Leaders' Statement released after the meeting also reaffirmed their commitment to the immediate resolution of the abductees issue.

With regard to the U.S., President Donald Trump raised the abductions issue with President Kim at the U.S.-North Korea Summit in June 2018, at the request of Prime Minister Abe. At the second U.S.-North Korea Summit in February 2019, President Trump raised the abductions issue with President Kim at the tête-à-tête meeting, which was held first on the first day, and clearly stated Prime Minister Abe's views regarding the abductions issue. Furthermore, at the small group dinner that followed, President Trump again raised the abductions issue, and a serious discussion was held between the leaders. During his visit to Japan in May 2022, President Biden met with the family members of the abductees, listened carefully and earnestly to the families' sentiments and their requests for U.S. support in resolving the abductions issue as soon as possible, and encouraged them. At the Japan-U.S. Summit Meetings on January 13 and May 18, 2023, Prime Minister Kishida asked for continued understanding and cooperation toward the resolution of the abductions issue, to which President Biden offered his full support. At the joint press conference following the Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting in August 2023, President Biden mentioned his meeting with the family members of the abductees and expressed the commitment to work together to see the return of all who have been abducted.

With regard to China, at the Japan-China Summit Meeting in June 2019, President Xi Jinping stated that he had conveyed Japan's position on Japan-North Korea relations and Prime Minister Abe's views to President Kim during the China-North Korea Summit held in the same month. Prime Minister Abe also gained the strong support of President Xi for the improvement of Japan-North Korea relations, including the abductions issue. At the Japan-China Summit Meeting on November 16, 2023, Prime Minister Kishida and President Xi discussed international affairs, such as North Korea, including the abductions issue, and confirmed that they would maintain close communication on those issues.

The ROK has also raised the abductions issue with North Korea at multiple opportunities, including the Inter-Korean Summit in April 2018. At the Japan-ROK Summit Meeting in December 2019, President Moon Jae-in of the ROK expressed his understanding

for Japan's position regarding the importance of the abductions issue and stated that the ROK had repeatedly raised the abductions issue with North Korea. At the Japan-ROK Summit Meetings held on March 16 and May 7, 2023, President Yoon reiterated his support for Japan regarding the abductions issue, and at the Japan-ROK Summit Meetings held on July 12 and November 16, the two leaders confirmed that they would work closely with each other in dealing with North Korea including the abductions issue.

At the UN Human Rights Council in April 2023 and the UN General Assembly in December, a resolution on the human rights situation in North Korea that was submitted by the EU and co-sponsored by Japan was adopted without a vote. Additionally, on August 17, 2023, a public meeting of the Security Council was held to discuss the human rights situation in North Korea, including the abductions issue, for the first time in about six years since December 2017, and after the meeting, the EU and 52 like-minded countries referred to the abductions issue in the joint stakeout. Japan will continue to closely coordinate and cooperate with relevant countries, including the U.S., toward the early resolution of the abductions issue.

C North Korea's External Relations, etc.

(A) U.S.-North Korea Relations

From 2018 to 2019, the U.S. and North Korea held two summit meetings as well as a meeting between President Trump and President Kim in Panmunjom, and in October 2019, U.S.-North Korea working-level talks were convened in Stockholm, Sweden. However, after this, no concrete progress was made in dialogues between the U.S. and North Korea.

Through President Biden's North Korea policy review in April 2021, the U.S. has made it clear that its goal remains the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and that it is stepping up its efforts to ensure the security of its allies, including Japan. In October 2022, the U.S. released a new National Security Strategy (NSS), indicating that it would seek sustained diplomacy toward the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and that it would strengthen extended deterrence in the face of North Korean weapons of mass destruction and missile threats. At the same

time, the U.S. has also stated on various occasions that the U.S. has no hostile intentions toward North Korea and that it is prepared to resume dialogue with North Korea without any preconditions.

On the other hand, it was reported that President Kim said in his speech at the 9th Session of the 14th Supreme People's Assembly in September: "the accelerated establishment of the triangular military alliance with Japan and the 'Republic of Korea' finally resulted in the emergence of the 'Asian-version NATO,' the root cause of war and aggression. This is just the worst actual threat, not threatening rhetoric or an imaginary entity" and that North Korea would "further promote solidarity with the nations standing against the U.S. and the West's strategy for hegemony."

In July, a U.S. Forces Korea soldier crossed the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) and was detained by North Korea. He was released in September. In response to a series of provocative acts by North Korea, including ballistic missile launches, the U.S. decided to additionally designate individuals and entities as subject of its own sanctions in March, April, May, June, August, and November of 2023, respectively.

(B) Inter-Korean Relations

In May 2022, the President Yoon administration was inaugurated in the ROK with the goal of "normalizing inter-Korean relations." In August, President Yoon proposed the "audacious initiative" that would provide various types of economic assistance on the condition of genuine and substantial denuclearization, but North Korea has not shown any willingness to respond to this proposal. In January 2023, President Kim was reported to have said that, "Now that the South Korean puppet forces [...] openly trumpet about 'preparations for war' have assumed our undoubted enemy," and in February, the ROK's defense white paper stated that North Korea's regime and military were "an enemy of the Republic of Korea."

In April, the inter-Korean communication line, which had been restored since October 2021, was disrupted again. In response, the Government of the ROK issued a statement from the Unification Minister expressing strong regret. In September, the Constitutional Court of the ROK ruled that a provision in a law enacted during the Moon administration

which banned the dissemination of leaflets to North Korea was unconstitutional. In November, the ROK announced the partial suspension of the “Agreement on the Implementation of the Historic Panmunjom Declaration in the Military Domain” that was signed in 2018, citing North Korea’s repeated violations of the agreement and the launch of a “military reconnaissance satellite.” In response, North Korea reportedly issued a statement saying that it would no longer be bound by the agreement. Furthermore, at the Ninth Enlarged Plenary Meeting of the 8th Central Committee of the WPK, there was reportedly a pivot in policy toward the ROK, with it being said that “The North-South relations have been completely fixed into the relations between two states hostile to each other and the relations between two belligerent states.”

In response to a series of provocative acts by North Korea, including ballistic missile launches, the ROK decided to additionally designate individuals and entities as subject to its own sanctions in February, March, April, May, June, July, September, and December, respectively.

(C) China-North Korea and Russia-North Korea Relations

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, since 2020 there have been no visits by dignitaries, but it was reported that in July 2023, a delegation headed by Li Hongzhong, Vice Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People’s Congress of China, and Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu visited North Korea to commemorate North Korea’s “70th anniversary of the victory in the Fatherland Liberation War,” and that letters from President Xi and President Vladimir Putin were delivered to President Kim. In relation with Russia, with the year 2023 being the 75th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations, President Kim visited Russia in September for the first time in four years and held a summit meeting with President Putin in Amur Oblast, where it was reported that the two sides agreed to strategic and tactical cooperation. In October, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited North Korea to hold a Russia-North Korea Foreign Ministers’ Meeting and paid a courtesy call to President Kim. On October 26, Japan, the U.S., and the ROK released the U.S.-Japan-ROK

Joint Statement on North Korea-Russia arms transfers, in which they strongly condemned the provision of military equipment and munitions by North Korea to Russia, and announced that Japan, the U.S., and the ROK were closely monitoring the situation regarding the possibility of military assistance from Russia to North Korea.

Trade between China and North Korea, which accounts for approximately 90% of North Korea’s entire external trade, was significantly reduced when compared to pre-COVID-19 levels due to traffic restrictions following the global spread of COVID-19, but has continued to be on a recovery trend since September 2022 when it was announced that cross-border rail freight between Dandong, China, and Sinuiju, North Korea, would be resumed. As a result, the China-North Korea trade volume in 2023 greatly exceeded that of the previous year and has recovered to pre-COVID-19 levels.

(D) Other Issues

In 2023, a total of 22 drifting or wrecked wooden vessels presumed to be from North Korea were discovered (49 in 2022) on Japan’s coast with the Sea of Japan. The Government of Japan continues its effort to gather and analyze information, with great interest on relevant developments. In September 2020, a vessel that appeared to be an official North Korean vessel in Japan’s EEZ in the west of the Yamatotai bank in the Sea of Japan was confirmed, and when this incident occurred the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conveyed Japan’s position to North Korea. Japan will continue to deal appropriately with these issues in close coordination among relevant ministries and agencies.

D Domestic Political Affairs and Economy

(A) Political Affairs

In January 2021, for the first time in approximately five years, North Korea held the Eighth Congress of the WPK, which is the highest decision-making institution in the WPK, and President Kim, while emphasizing “people-first politics,” is reported to have given an activity summary of achievements/reflections on the past five years and on future issues, including the continued nuclear and missile activities as well as the external relations. It was also reported that the “Five-Year Plan

for the Development of National Defence Science and the Weapons System” and the “Major Five-Point Goals for Developing the National Defence Capabilities” were presented at the Congress of the WPK. At the Sixth Enlarged Plenary Meeting of the 8th Central Committee of the WPK that was held in December 2022, President Kim reportedly mentioned the launch of the first “military satellite” and emphasized strengthening defense capabilities.

At the 8th Session of the 14th Supreme People’s Assembly held in January 2023, the year 2022 was reportedly evaluated as “full of unprecedented challenges and threats” while also reporting that “the Korean people achieved remarkable successes in the struggle for economic construction and improvement of the people’s standard of living.” It was also reported that the “Law on the Protection of the Cultured Pyongyang Dialect” was adopted to “exterminate non-normative language elements.” In February, the 7th Enlarged Plenary Meeting of the 8th Central Committee of the WPK was held, and President Kim was reported to have said that “the WPK has attached importance to the rural question as a strategic one which should be settled without fail.” In June the 8th Enlarged Plenary Meeting of the 8th Central Committee of the WPK was held with President Kim in attendance, and it was reported that the development of a military reconnaissance satellite was mentioned as one of “the Five-Point Major Goals for Developing the Defense Capabilities” and that the need to “push ahead with the expansion and development of the space industry as a national affair” was pointed out. At the 9th Session of the 14th Supreme People’s Assembly held in September, it was reported that decisions were made regarding constitutional amendments and changing the “National Aerospace Development Administration of the DPRK” to the “National Aerospace Technology Administration of the DPRK.”

At the 9th Enlarged Plenary Meeting of the 8th Central Committee of the WPK that was held at the end of December, President Kim is reported to have praised 2023 as a “year full of eye-opening victories and events” and announced to lay a “foundation for steadily increasing the production of nuclear weapons” in 2024, as well as vowing to launch in addition three reconnaissance satellites.

Additionally, during the launch of an ICBM-class ballistic missile in November 2022, President Kim is reported to have “guided on the spot” that launched together with his “beloved child,” allegedly his daughter, who publicly appeared for the first time. Subsequently, President Kim is reported to have been accompanied by this child on various occasions, including a February 2023 event related to the “75th Founding Anniversary of the Korean People’s Army (KPA),” the April inspection of the National Aerospace Development Administration, and the visit to the KPA Navy Command.

(B) Economy

It was reported that at the 8th Congress of the WPK in January 2021, President Kim presented the new “five-year plan for the national economic development” (2021 to 2025) centered around self-reliance and self-prosperity while referring to difficulties due to sanctions, natural disasters and the global health crisis. In January 2023, President Kim is reported to have defined the year 2023, the third year of the five-year plan for the national economic development, as “a year of making a big stride in the development of the national economy, a year of attaining key goals in increasing production—carrying out the strategy of readjustment and reinforcement and improving the people’s living standards,” and to set “as the main targets the economic indices and 12 major goals to be attained by all sectors of the national economy.”

E Other Issues

Defectors who have fled North Korea have to be kept in hiding to avoid being cracked down on by the authorities in the countries where they are staying or to avoid being forcibly repatriated to North Korea. The Government of Japan is addressing the protection of and support for these North Korean defectors, in line with the purpose of the North Korean Human Rights Violation Act, taking into account a comprehensive range of factors, including humanitarian considerations, the safety of those concerned, and relations with the countries in which these defectors reside. Relevant ministries and agencies in Japan are closely working together to promote measures aimed at helping the settlement of defectors accepted by Japan.

(2) Republic of Korea (ROK)

A Situation in the ROK

(A) Domestic Affairs

The Yoon Suk Yeol administration has sought to promote a variety of policies amidst rising international prices, including stabilizing prices and people's lives, expanding exports and investment, and promoting a market-centered economy and sound public finances. However, the National Assembly continued to be divided, with the ruling People Power Party holding a minority of seats and the largest opposition party, the Democratic Party of Korea, holding the sole majority. The ruling and opposition parties were bitterly divided over various issues including the role of individual policies and the appointment of ministers. Although an opposition-led motion was passed to impeach the Minister of the Interior and Safety over the 2022 Itaewon crowd accident, the claim was dismissed in a hearing at the Constitutional Court. In September, a proposal to dismiss the Prime Minister was passed for the first time in the history of the ROK's constitutional government. In addition, the appointment of the government's nominee for Supreme Court Chief Justice was rejected, and for about two and a half months the position of Supreme Court Chief Justice remained vacant for the first time in about 35 years.

The term of office for the current National Assembly concluded at the end of May 2024, with a general election for National Assembly members being held in April. Both the ruling and opposition parties have been moving towards the elections in earnest since the end of 2023.

(B) Foreign Policy

President Yoon has promoted active summit diplomacy, including visiting foreign countries with the goal of becoming a "Global Pivotal State (GPS) that contributes to freedom, peace, and prosperity." Since his inauguration and until the end of October 2023, President Yoon held 142 summit meetings with 93 countries.

As for relations with the U.S., President Yoon visited the U.S. for a State Visit from April 24 to 30 on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the U.S.-ROK Alliance. This was the first State Visit to the U.S. by an ROK President in about 12 years since President Lee Myung-bak. President Yoon held a Summit Meeting

with President Joseph Biden, and after the meeting, in addition to releasing a Leaders' Joint Statement, the Washington Declaration was also released to strengthen extended deterrence for the ROK. As a result, the U.S.-ROK Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG) was established in July. In addition to the above, the following statements were also released on the occasion of President Yoon's visit to the U.S.: "Joint Statement of the U.S. and the ROK on Cooperation in Quantum Information Science and Technologies," "ROK-U.S. Joint Statement on Launching the Next Generation Critical and Emerging Technologies Dialogue," "Strategic Cybersecurity Cooperation Framework between the ROK and the U.S.," "Joint Statement from the Presidents of the U.S. and the ROK on the Identification of Medal of Honor Recipient from Korean War," and "Joint Statement of Intent for Cooperation on Space Exploration and Science." During his visit, President Yoon also visited the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Goddard Space Flight Center, gave an address to the U.S. Congress, and delivered a speech at Harvard University. President Yoon also held an ROK-U.S. Summit Meeting with President Biden on the occasion of the Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting held at Camp David in August.

In terms of relations with China, President Yoon had his first meeting with State Council Premier Li Qiang on the occasion of the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings in September. Later that month, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo visited China, the first visit by a Prime Minister in four and a half years, to attend the opening ceremony of the Asian Games Hangzhou, and took this opportunity to meet with President Xi Jinping. In November, the ROK hosted a Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Busan for the first time in about four years, with Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi visiting the ROK to attend this meeting and then holding a China-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

(C) Economy

In 2023, the GDP growth rate in the ROK fell from 2.6% to 1.4% in comparison to the previous year. The total amount of exports decreased by 7.4% year-on-year to approximately 632.7 billion U.S. dollars, and the total amount of imports decreased by 12.1%

year-on-year to approximately 642.7 billion U.S. dollars. Although this was a trade deficit for a second consecutive year, the deficit amounted to approximately 10 billion U.S. dollars, which was smaller than the record high deficit of approximately 47.8 billion U.S. dollars in 2022 (figures published by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy).

At the time of its inauguration in May 2022, the Yoon administration announced economic policies based on four pillars: “A dynamic economy that puts the private sector at its core,” “An economy that pushes toward economic leaps by addressing structural issues,” “A leading economy that prepares for the future,” and “An inclusive economy that moves forward together.” In 2022, the “new Regime’s Energy Policy” and the “Semiconductor Superpower Strategy” were released, and the ROK is proceeding with economic policies based on these documents. In the private sector, in September 2023, the Federation of Korean Industries (FKI) announced that, in order to eliminate influence from the issue in 2016 when FKI companies donated large amounts of money to a foundation associated with a friend of former President Park Geun-hye, (at the time, numerous member companies, including the four major groups (Samsung, Hyundai Motor, SK, and LG) withdrew from the FKI), it changed itself and its Korean name to “correct an organizational culture that allowed political and economic collusion in the past,” and at this time the main companies of the four major groups that had previously withdrawn from the FKI once again became member companies.

In recent years, the ROK has had a rapidly declining birthrate and aging population. In 2023, the total fertility rate was a record low of 0.72 children per woman, making the declining birthrate issue all the more serious.

B Japan-ROK Relations

(A) Bilateral Relations

2023 was a year of major developments in Japan-ROK relations.

The ROK is an important neighboring country with which Japan should cooperate as partners in dealing with various issues of the international community. In particular, under the current severe international environment, Japan and the ROK need to deepen coordination and expand the scope of cooperation across a variety of areas in order to secure their mutual interest in regional peace and stability.

The two countries have built a close, friendly and cooperative relationship based on the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea, the Agreement on the Settlement of Problem concerning Property and Claims and on the Economic Co-operation between Japan and the Republic of Korea, and other relevant agreements that the two countries concluded when they normalized their relationship in 1965, but bilateral relations had been severely strained over the past several years, particularly due to the issue of former civilian workers from the Korean Peninsula (CWKs). However, since the change in administration in the ROK, and the inauguration of the Yoon Suk Yeol administration in 2022, close communication between the two countries’ Foreign Ministries has taken place, including between the foreign ministers. Subsequently, on March 6, 2023, the Government of the ROK announced its position on the issue of CWKs. In response, on the same day, the Government of Japan released a comment by Foreign Minister Hayashi⁹, stating that it values the measures announced by the Government of the ROK, as a move toward restoring Japan-ROK relations, which had been severely strained due to the ROK Supreme Court ruling in 2018, to a sound footing, and Japan-ROK relations have turned around.

On March 16, just 10 days after the measures were announced, President Yoon visited Japan^{10,11} in the first bilateral visit by the ROK President in about 12 years. At the Japan-ROK Summit Meeting, the leaders concurred to resume “shuttle diplomacy,” in which both leaders frequently visit each other without being bound by formality, and also agreed on the early resumption

⁹ See References on the Issue of Former Civilian Workers from the Korean Peninsula (CWKs)

¹⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs website explaining President Yoon’s visit to Japan on March 16 and 17: https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/na/kr/page1e_000593.html

¹¹ Prime Minister’s Office website on the March 16 Japan-ROK joint press conference: https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/statement/202303/_00010.html



of the Japan-ROK Security Dialogue and the Japan-ROK Vice-Ministerial Strategic Dialogue as well as the launch of a bilateral consultation on economic security. Furthermore, the two leaders welcomed the progress made in the area of export control.

Following this, Prime Minister Kishida visited the ROK on May 7, the first bilateral visit by a Prime Minister of Japan in approximately 12 years.¹² At the Summit Meeting with President Yoon, the two leaders confirmed that dialogue and cooperation between the two governments were moving forward in a wide range of areas, as well as the robust resurgence of bilateral exchanges in the business sector and the robustness seen in private sector exchanges and parliamentary exchanges, and welcomed the fact that the improvement of the Japan-ROK relations is on track. Regarding the ALPS treated water, Prime Minister Kishida stated that Japan will continue to provide the ROK with explanations based on scientific evidence in a highly transparent and sincere manner, and the two leaders concurred on the dispatch of a delegation of ROK experts to TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station.

Subsequently, on the occasion of the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, President Yoon visited Japan again, and the two leaders continued to deepen their trust. They visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and offered prayers together at the Cenotaph for the Victims of the ROK atomic bombing victims.

Throughout 2023, a total of seven Japan-ROK Summit Meetings took place taking the opportunities of the NATO Summit Meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania in July, the Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting at Camp David in the U.S. in August, the G20 New Delhi Summit in New Delhi, India in September, and the APEC Leaders' Meeting in San Francisco, U.S. in November. Through these frequent exchanges, Prime Minister Kishida and President Yoon have been driving the development of Japan-ROK cooperation in a variety of fields and have been promoting efforts for their mutual interest which is ensuring regional peace and stability. Furthermore, in San Francisco, the two



Prime Minister Kishida's visit to the ROK (official welcome ceremony) (May 8, Seoul, ROK; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

leaders appeared together at a Summit discussion held at Stanford University and discussed cooperation in the field of advanced science and technology. During the same period, communication between the Foreign Ministers also took place extremely frequently, with six face-to-face meetings and three telephone calls. In particular, regarding the protection of Japanese nationals living overseas, close cooperation was made possible based on exchanges between the Foreign Ministers in support of evacuations and departures from Sudan and Israel. Intergovernmental dialogue has become significantly more active, including ministerial-level contacts across a wide range of areas including finance, aviation, ICT, tourism, trade, energy, culture, and the environment. Moreover, there has been progress on a wide range of cooperation between Japan and the ROK, including active economic and business exchanges, a recovery in the number of flights, and expanded cooperation in the fields of finance and energy.

Given the severe security environment in the Indo-Pacific, close cooperation between the two countries is necessary now more than ever. As Japan-ROK relations get back on track and continue to improve, a variety of issues in the international arena were discussed at summit meetings and foreign ministers' meetings, including the Indo-Pacific, North Korea, Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and the Israel-Palestine situation, where they confirmed that they will further enhance coordination on global issues.

¹² Ministry of Foreign Affairs website explaining Prime Minister Kishida's visit to the ROK on May 7 and 8: https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/na/kr/page1e_000658.html



(B) The Issue of Former Civilian Workers from the Korean Peninsula (CWKs)

The Government of Japan is of the view that it is necessary to advance Japan-ROK relations based on the platform on which the friendly and cooperative bilateral relations have been built since the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1965, and that the issue of CWKs, which was ruled on by the ROK Supreme Court in 2018, needs to be resolved to that end. Based on this recognition, the Foreign Ministry engaged in close communication with their ROK counterpart including at the Ministerial level since the inauguration of the Yoon Suk Yeol administration in May 2022.

On March 6, 2023, the Government of the ROK announced its position on the issue of CWKs, and a ROK foundation will pay court-awarded fees and late charges to the plaintiffs in the three 2018 final judgements by the ROK Supreme Court.

In response, on the same day, Foreign Minister Hayashi made public the view of the Government of Japan, stating that it values the measures announced by the ROK government as a move toward restoring Japan-ROK relations, which had been severely strained due to the ROK Supreme Court ruling in 2018, to a sound footing; that the Government of Japan will enhance Japan-ROK and Japan-ROK-U.S. coordination; that the Government of Japan confirms that it upholds in its entirety the positions of the previous Cabinets on history, including the “Japan-ROK Joint Statement” issued in October 1998; and that the Government of Japan hopes to see a robust expansion of political, economic and cultural exchanges between the two countries, together with the implementation of the announced measures.¹³ The U.S., Australia, the UK, the European Union (EU), Germany, Canada, the UN, and others publicly welcomed the announcements made by the Government of the ROK and the Government of Japan.

In April, the Government of the ROK announced that it had made payments to 10 plaintiffs. Later, at the Japan-ROK Summit joint press conference during Prime Minister Kishida’s visit to the ROK in May, he said, “As efforts by the Government of the ROK have progressed, I was moved by the fact that many people

opened their hearts for the future, even though they have not forgotten the painful memories of the past. My own heart aches for the fact that many people experienced tremendous pain and suffering under harsh conditions at the time.”

Subsequently, another payment was made to one plaintiff in July. The Government of the ROK has expressed its intention to continue to make the utmost efforts to gain the understanding of the plaintiffs, and the Government of Japan will continue to maintain close communication with the ROK side.

Meanwhile, in December 2023 and January 2024, the ROK Supreme Court rendered final judgments in multiple similar lawsuits and followed the 2018 judgement in ordering Japanese companies to pay compensation. On these judgements, as well as on a case in February 2024 where a deposit previously paid by a Japanese company to the ROK court was handed over to the plaintiffs, the Government of Japan has lodged protests to the ROK government that these are extremely regrettable and totally unacceptable. In its announcement of the measures on March 6, 2023, the Government of the ROK has stated that a ROK foundation will pay the judgement court-awarded fees and late charges in the event that other currently pending CWK-related lawsuits (at the time of the announcement) end in favor of the plaintiffs.

The below Ministry of Foreign Affairs website details the issue of CWKs.

https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/na/kr/page4e_000947.html



(C) The Issue of Comfort Women

Japan has sincerely dealt with the issue of comfort women as it has been a major diplomatic issue between Japan and the ROK since the 1990s. The issue concerning property and claims between Japan and the ROK was settled “completely and finally” in 1965 through the Agreement on the Settlement of Problem concerning Property and Claims and on the Economic Co-operation between Japan and the Republic of Korea. However, from the perspective of facilitating

¹³ See References on the Issue of Former Civilian Workers from the Korean Peninsula (CWKs)

feasible remedies for the former comfort women, in 1995, the people and the Government of Japan cooperated to establish the Asian Women's Fund in 1995, through which they carried out medical and welfare projects and provided "atonement money" to each former comfort woman in Asian and other countries, including the ROK. Furthermore, successive Prime Ministers have sent letters expressing their "apology and remorse" to former comfort women.

Furthermore, as a result of great diplomatic efforts, the Governments of Japan and the ROK confirmed that the issue of comfort women was "resolved finally and irreversibly" with the agreement reached at the Japan-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting in December 2015. Directly after this Japan-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting, the Japanese and ROK leaders also confirmed that they would take responsibility as leaders to implement this agreement and that they would deal with various issues based on the spirit of this agreement, and that the Government of the ROK committed to the agreement. This agreement was welcomed by the international community, including then-UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the U.S. Government. In accordance with the agreement, in August 2016, the Government of Japan contributed 1 billion Japanese yen to "the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation" established by the Government of the ROK. As of December 31, 2023, the fund provided financial support to 35 out of 47 former comfort women who were alive at the time of the agreement, and to the bereaved families of 65 out of 199 former comfort women who were deceased at the time. The agreement has been received positively by many former comfort women.

However, in December 2016, a comfort woman statue¹⁴ was installed on the sidewalk facing the Consulate-General of Japan in Busan. Later, the Moon Jae-in administration was inaugurated in May 2017. Based on the results of the assessment made by the Taskforce to Review the Agreement on Comfort Women Issue under the direct supervision of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK, the position of the Government of the ROK on the issue of comfort

women was announced to be as follows: i) it will not ask for a renegotiation with Japan; and ii) the 2015 agreement, which fails to properly reflect the wishes of the victims, does not constitute a true resolution of the issue. In November 2018, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family announced that it would proceed with its dissolution of "the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation" and has since moved ahead with the dissolution procedures. The moves to dissolve the Foundation are totally unacceptable for Japan in light of the 2015 Japan-ROK Agreement.

Moreover, on January 8, 2021, in the lawsuit filed by former comfort women and others against the Government of Japan, the Seoul Central District Court of the Republic of Korea rendered a judgment which ordered the Government of Japan, *inter alia*, to pay compensation to the plaintiffs, denying the application of the principle of State immunity under international law. On January 23, 2021, this judgment was confirmed.¹⁵ On April 21 of the same year, in a similar lawsuit filed by former comfort women and others, the Seoul Central District Court dismissed the case, taking into account the principle of State immunity under international law, but on November 23, 2023, at the appeal in this case, the Seoul High Court rendered a judgement denying the application of the principle of State immunity under international law and allowing the plaintiff's lawsuit. Japan has repeatedly expressed its position that this lawsuit must be dismissed because for these comfort women lawsuits it is not acceptable for the Government of Japan to be subject to the jurisdiction of the ROK in accordance with the principle of State immunity in international law. As mentioned above, the issue concerning property and claims between Japan and the ROK, including the issue of comfort women, was "settled completely and finally," with the Agreement on the Settlement of Problem concerning Property and Claims and on the Economic Co-operation between Japan and the Republic of Korea of 1965. Furthermore, it was confirmed that the issue of comfort women was "resolved finally and irreversibly" with the agreement between Japan and the ROK in 2015. Therefore, these judgments are extremely

¹⁴ For the sake of practical convenience, they are referred to as "comfort woman statues." However, the use of this term is not a reflection of the recognition that these statues correctly embody the reality of those women at that time.

¹⁵ See References on the Issue of Comfort Women

regrettable and absolutely unacceptable, as it is clearly contrary to international law and agreements between the two countries. Japan has strongly urged the ROK to immediately take appropriate measures to remedy the status of its breaches of international law on its own responsibility as a country.

The Japan-ROK agreement in 2015 is an agreement between two countries, and abiding by promises made between two countries is the foundation of bilateral relations. The ROK has a responsibility to the international community to steadily implement the agreement. As stated above, the Government of Japan has implemented all measures it committed to under the Japan-ROK agreement. The Government of the ROK itself also acknowledges that this agreement is an official agreement between the two governments, and the Government of Japan will continue to strongly urge the ROK to steadily implement the Japan-ROK Agreement (See page 40 for the comfort women issue in the international community).

The below Ministry of Foreign Affairs website details Japan's Efforts on the Issue of Comfort Women.

https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/page22e_000883.html



(D) Takeshima

Regarding the dispute between Japan and the ROK concerning the territorial sovereignty over Takeshima, Takeshima is indisputably an inherent territory of Japan both in light of historical facts and based on international law. However, the ROK has continued its illegal occupation of Takeshima with no legal basis

in international law, including stationing permanent security personnel. Japan has been keeping the world informed about Japan's position on the issue through various media platforms.¹⁶ Japan has also repeatedly lodged strong protests against the ROK over matters such as South Korean citizens including members of the ROK's National Assembly landing on the island, and the ROK's military exercises and marine surveys in and around Takeshima. In 2023, military exercises were conducted on and around Takeshima and members of the ROK National Assembly landed on Takeshima. The Government of Japan considers these activities unacceptable in view of Japan's position and lodged strong protests.¹⁷ Japan will continue to respond resolutely based on Japan's basic position regarding Takeshima.

For a peaceful settlement of the Takeshima dispute, Japan proposed to the ROK that the issue be referred to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1954, 1962 and 2012. However, the ROK rejected the proposal in all instances. Japan is determined to continue to engage in persistent diplomatic efforts to settle the Takeshima dispute in a peaceful manner in accordance with international law.

(E) Update on Licensing Policies and Procedures on Exports of Controlled Items to the ROK

With regard to issues concerning export control between Japan and the ROK,¹⁸ on March 6, 2023, the Government of Japan and the Government of the ROK announced that they would hold a Japan-Korea Export Control Policy Dialogue so as to return to a pre-July 2019 state, and the Government of the ROK decided to suspend the WTO dispute settlement procedures during the Dialogue. On March 16, the ROK

¹⁶ In February 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a pamphlet entitled "Takeshima: 10 points to understand the Takeshima Dispute." It is available on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website in 11 languages: Japanese, English, Korean, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Russian, Chinese and Italian. Furthermore, since October 2013, videos and flyers about Takeshima have been available on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website, and they are currently available in the above 11 languages. Furthermore, Japan has taken initiatives such as distributing a smartphone app that aims to increase awareness of the Takeshima issue. Further details are available on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/takeshima/index.html>

¹⁷ In May, Democratic Party of Korea lawmaker Jeon Yong-gi landed on the island. ROK armed forces conducted military training related to Takeshima in June and December 2023. The Government of Japan immediately conveyed to the Government of the ROK that such an act was unacceptable and extremely regrettable in light of Japan's position on sovereignty over Takeshima, and strongly protested against the act.

¹⁸ On September 11, 2019, the Government of the ROK requested bilateral consultations with Japan under the World Trade Organization (WTO) dispute settlement procedures, claiming the update by the Government of Japan of the operation of measures related to Japan's export to the ROK of three items for semiconductors (fluorinated polyimide, resist and hydrogen fluoride), and the system for requiring individual export licenses, is in breach of the WTO Agreements. The Government of the ROK announced on November 22, 2019, that it suspended the effect of the notification of termination of the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Republic of Korea on the Protection of Classified Military Information (GSOMIA), and in doing so said that it would also suspend its WTO dispute settlement procedures while the Japan-ROK Export Control Policy Dialogue would be held as normal. Subsequently Export Control Policy Dialogues were held in December 2019 and March 2020. However, the Government of the ROK resumed WTO dispute settlement procedures in June 2020, and the WTO Dispute Settlement Body decided to establish a panel in July 2020.



announced that it would withdraw its complaint to the WTO dispute settlement procedure regarding Japan's export control measures, and on the same day, Japan decided to revise its operation on the exports of three semiconductor-related items (fluorinated polyimide, resist and hydrogen fluoride) to the ROK applying the Special General Bulk Export License system (the circular notice was revised on March 23).¹⁹

Subsequently, in April, the Government of the ROK restored Japan to its "whitelist (countries with preferential treatment for export screenings)," and in July, Japan added the ROK to "Group A" under its Export Trade Control Order, after the public comment procedures and a Cabinet Decision.²⁰ Additionally, the export control authorities in Japan and the ROK signed a Memorandum of Cooperation on a follow-up framework to take appropriate measures, including revision of their respective systems and operations.²¹

(F) Exchanges and Travel

In 2018, the number of people making visits between the two countries was approximately 10.49 million people, but since early 2020, travel between Japan and the ROK significantly decreased due to the strengthening of border measures related to the spread of COVID-19, and in 2021, approximately only 30,000 people made trips between the two countries. In 2022, due to visa exemption measures resuming in both countries and the resumption of flights between Japan and the ROK including the Haneda-Gimpo route, the number of travelers has gone up with the number of visitors between Japan and the ROK reaching about 1.31 million people. In 2023, the number of travelers between Japan and the ROK increased significantly to approximately 9.27 million people as border control measures were lifted, and airline service between Japan and the ROK was restored to pre-COVID-19 levels.

In Japan, K-POP and related content is widely accepted mainly among younger generations, and

Korean dramas and movies have become widely popular amongst people of all ages. In 2023, the major Japan-ROK grassroots exchange program "Japan-Korea Exchange Festival" (Nikkan Koryu Omatsuri) was held in person in both Tokyo and Seoul, with a total of approximately 116,000 people from both countries participating. The Government of Japan works on promoting mutual understanding, primarily between Japanese and ROK youth, and building a friendly and cooperative relationship for the future through Japan's Friendship Ties Programs (JENESYS 2023). Since FY2020, online exchanges continued even when face-to-face exchanges were halted due to the spread of COVID-19, and in 2022 face-to-face exchange programs were partially resumed. In 2023, in light of the improvements in Japan-ROK relations, the two governments decided to fully resume face-to-face exchange programs in order to double the number of exchanges compared to the previous year, and are working to revitalize exchanges between the youth generation, who represent the future of both countries.

(G) Other Issues

The Governments of Japan and the ROK concluded the Agreement on the Protection of Classified Military Information (GSOMIA) in November 2016 in order to strengthen cooperation and coordination between the two countries in the field of security and contribute to regional peace and stability. Afterwards, the agreement was automatically extended in 2017 and 2018. However, the Government of the ROK announced on August 22, 2019, its decision to terminate the GSOMIA in connection with Japan's update of licensing policies and procedures on exports (see (E) above) and notified the termination on the following day, August 23. Following this and after exchanges between Japan and the ROK, on November 22, 2019, the Government of the ROK announced that it would suspend the effect of the notification of termination

19 See the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry website dated March 23, 2023, regarding the circular about the partial amendment of "Operation of the Cabinet Order on Export Trade Control": https://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2023/0323_001.html

20 See the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry website dated June 27, 2023, regarding the Cabinet Order to partially amend the Export Trade Control Order: https://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2023/0627_004.html

21 See the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry website dated July 11, 2023, regarding the Japan-Korea Export Control Policy Dialogue: https://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2023/0711_001.html



of August 23. On March 21, 2023, immediately after President Yoon's visit to Japan, the Government of the ROK officially notified that it would withdraw its notification of August 2019 to terminate the Japan-ROK GSOMIA. In view of the current regional security environment, the Government of Japan considers it important for the Agreement to continue operating in a stable manner.

Sea of Japan is the only internationally established name for the sea area concerned, and the UN and governments of major countries such as the U.S. adopt Sea of Japan as the official name. Objections to this name, however, were first raised by the ROK and North Korea in 1992. Since then, the ROK and North Korea have been objecting to the name at the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN),²² the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and other international conferences. These assertions however are groundless, and Japan has firmly refuted these assertions each time they arise.²³

Furthermore, Japan has been urging the Government of the ROK through its diplomatic channels to return cultural properties that were stolen and are currently in the ROK²⁴ to Japan as soon as possible, and Japan will continue to take appropriate steps.

Japan has provided support and taken measures as much as possible from a humanitarian perspective in various fields, including responses for ethnic Koreans in Sakhalin,²⁵ addressing the issue of atomic bomb survivors living in the ROK,²⁶ and helping Hansen's disease patients admitted to sanitariums in the ROK.²⁷

C Economy

The total value of trade between the two countries amounted to approximately 10.90 trillion Japanese yen in 2023. Japan is the ROK's fourth largest trading partner, and the ROK is Japan's fifth largest trading partner. The ROK's trade deficit with Japan decreased by approximately 18.2% from a year earlier, reaching approximately 2.20 trillion Japanese yen (Trade Statistics of Japan, Ministry of Finance). Japanese direct investment in the ROK totaled approximately 1.30 billion U.S. dollars (down 14.7% from the previous year) (figures published by the ROK Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy), making Japan the ROK's fourth largest source of foreign direct investment (excluding the Cayman Islands from the ranking). Japan and the ROK also cooperate together as parties to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement and as members of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), and work together in various economic frameworks, including the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In December, the 15th Japan-ROK High-Level Economic Consultations were held for the first time in about eight years to discuss a wide range of topics, including bilateral economic relations and the international economic situation.

As for import restrictions on Japanese food products by the Government of the ROK, Japan is taking various opportunities to urge the ROK to remove the restrictions as soon as possible.

²² A UN conference where experts on place names and geospatial information from each country discuss, from a technical point of view, the definitions of terms related to place names and the notation methods for place names. In 2017, the UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Name, which had been held every five years, and the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names, which had been held every two years, were integrated into the United Nations Group of Experts on Place Names (UNGEGN).

²³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs website detailing the issue of the name of the "Sea of Japan": <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/maritime/japan/index.html>

²⁴ After being stolen in Tsushima City, Nagasaki Prefecture in 2012 and shipped to the ROK, the "Kanzeon Bosatsu Statue" was collected and stored by the Government of the ROK. A Korean temple asserting ownership of the statue has filed a claim seeking to have the Government of the ROK hand over the statue, and in January 2017 the Daejeon District Court issued a verdict of the first hearing to the plaintiff's side (the Korean temple), but in February 2023 the Daejeon High Court reversed the initial ruling and dismissed the plaintiff's claim. The plaintiffs have made an appeal, but in October 2023 the Supreme Court dismissed the appeal.

²⁵ For various reasons, before the end of World War II, people from the Korean Peninsula traveled to what was then known as Minami Karafuto (South Sakhalin) and were compelled to remain there for a long time after the war ended under the de facto rule of the Soviet Union, without being given the opportunity to return to the ROK. The Government of Japan is providing such people with support, such as to enable them to return home temporarily and to visit Sakhalin.

²⁶ This is the issue of provision of support to those who were exposed to the atomic bombs while living in Hiroshima or Nagasaki during World War II and subsequently went to live overseas. To date, Japan has provided support in the form of the Atomic Bomb Victim Health Handbook and allowances based on the Atomic Bombs Survivors' Assistance Act.

²⁷ In February 2006, the "Act on Payment of Compensation to Inmates of Hansen's Disease Sanatorium" was amended, and former residents of Hansen's disease sanatoriums outside of Japan, which were established by Japan before the end of World War II, were made eligible for compensation, similar to former residents of domestic sanatoriums. Additionally, in November 2019, the "Act on Payment of Compensation to Families of Former Patients of Hansen's Disease" was enacted, and the families of former Hansen's disease patients were also made eligible for compensation.



4 Southeast Asia

(1) Indonesia

Indonesia is a major country in the Southeast Asia region with the fourth largest population in the world (at approximately 270 million people) and situated in a strategic location on sea lanes such as the Strait of Malacca. Indonesia plays a leading role in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Indonesia was the ASEAN Chair for 2023) and has often been taking the initiative in efforts to address various challenges in the regional and international community while serving as the sole G20 member from ASEAN.

President Joko's second administration, which started in October 2019, is a stable administration where the ruling parties coalition occupies approximately 82% of the seats in the House of Representatives. This administration's priorities are (a) infrastructure development, (b) human resources development, (c) investment promotion, (d) bureaucratic reforms, and (e) appropriate execution of the state budget. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, Indonesia's economic growth rate, which had been maintained consistently at around 5% until then, recorded negative growth in 2020, but returned to positive growth of 5.3% in 2022. Japan is actively promoting cooperation in infrastructure development and human resources development, which are priorities of the second Joko administration.

2023 marked the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Indonesia. In May, President Joko Widodo visited Japan on the occasion of the G7 Hiroshima Summit and held a bilateral summit meeting, and in September Prime Minister Kishida visited Indonesia on the occasion of the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings and held a bilateral summit meeting. At the September Summit Meeting, in light of the comprehensive and continued developments of the Japan-Indonesia Strategic Partnership and in commemoration of the 65th anniversary of the Indonesia-Japan diplomatic relations as well as the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, the two leaders concurred to elevate the partnership to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. In December, President Joko visited Japan and,



Japan-Indonesia Foreign Ministers' Meeting (March 6, Tokyo)

together with Prime Minister Kishida, co-chaired the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, and the two leaders also had a bilateral summit meeting and confirmed an agreement in principle on the substantially concluded negotiations to amend the Japan-Indonesia Economic Partnership Agreement. In March, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a Foreign Ministers' Meeting (Japan-Indonesia Ministerial-Level Strategic Dialogue) with Minister for Foreign Affairs Retno L.P. Marsudi, who was visiting Japan as a guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in September Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a Foreign Ministers' Meeting on the occasion of the UN General Assembly. At these summit meetings and foreign ministers' meetings, both countries closely exchanged views on the strengthening of bilateral relations as well as cooperation in addressing various issues in the region and the international community (See the Column on page 73).

(2) Cambodia

Cambodia, located in the Mekong region, is a key country in strengthening connectivity and narrowing the development gap in the region. Cambodia had been averaging approximately 7% growth for the past 20 years, and, although GDP growth in 2020 was negative due to the impacts of COVID-19, in 2022 it returned to positive growth at 5.0%.

In terms of domestic affairs, the general election held in July saw the ruling Cambodian People's Party win a landslide victory after the Candlelight Party, which had become the largest opposition party in the 2022 commune council elections, was denied the right to register its candidates. Hun Sen, who had served as Cambodia's

COLUMN

Visit by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress to Indonesia

Following a long-standing invitation, Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress visited Indonesia from June 17 to 23 as their first international goodwill visit since the accession to the Throne. The year 2023 was a historic milestone, marking not only the 65th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between Japan and Indonesia, but also the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. The visit by Their Majesties to Indonesia in such a memorable year demonstrated to Japan and beyond the deep friendly relations between the two countries.

Their Majesties received a grand welcome from President Joko Widodo and the First Lady, as well as officials of the Government of Indonesia, at a welcoming event and Luncheon at Bogor Palace. Before the Luncheon, President Joko himself drove a cart for Their Majesties to Bogor Botanical Garden, which Their Majesties the Emperor Emeritus and Empress Emerita also had visited in 1991. Their Majesties received a cordial welcome as the President and First Lady guided them around the garden. Their Majesties also met and talked about exchanges between the two countries with local Japanese residents and Indonesians with ties to Japan, and had friendly exchanges with the younger generation via a visit to Darma Persada University and a vocational high school.



Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress responding to the media with President Joko and the First Lady at Bogor Palace (June 19, Bogor, Indonesia; Photo: Indonesian Presidential Palace)



His Majesty the Emperor heads to the banquet venue with Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X (the Governor of Yogyakarta Special Region) at Kraton Palace (June 21, Yogyakarta, Indonesia; Photo: Kraton Palace of Yogyakarta)

His Majesty the Emperor is deeply interested in water issues and visited related facilities such as the Pluit Pumping Station in Jakarta, which was developed with Japanese cooperation, and the Sabo Technical Center in the ancient city of Yogyakarta, where he enthusiastically spoke about issues such as flood control with those involved. In Yogyakarta, His Majesty received a warm welcome from Sultan Hamengku Buwono X, the Governor of Yogyakarta Special Region, whom Their Majesties the Emperor Emeritus and Empress Emerita met in 1991, and other members of the Sultanate of Yogyakarta. His Majesty also visited Borobudur Temple, a World Heritage Site located near Yogyakarta.

During the visit, Their Majesties received a warm welcome at various locations not just from officials of the Government of

Indonesia, but also by the Indonesian people at large, as they waved the national flags of both countries. This visit provided an opportunity to reaffirm the history of exchanges and cooperation between Japan and Indonesia, and to further deepen the friendly and cooperative relationship that both countries have cultivated over the years, including through exchanges with the younger generation. It is expected to play a bridging role between the two countries.

Prime Minister for many years, stepped down from his post, and a new Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Hun Manet was formed in August 2023.

Japan has cooperated with Cambodia's peace, reconstruction, and development efforts, including in the first full-scale deployment of UN peacekeeping operations (PKO) in 1992. Moreover, in recent years, investment by Japanese companies has progressed smoothly and economic relations have expanded, and cooperation is also progressing in new fields such as security and digital technologies.

2023 marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Cambodia, and the relationship between the two countries has been elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (See the Column on page 75). In September, Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Hun Manet held their first Summit Meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia, and the two leaders also met again during the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit that was held in Tokyo in December. At that time, the two leaders concurred on the list of cooperation items in the digital area that Japan proposed to the Cambodian side as the Co-Creation for Common Agenda Initiative, which was newly introduced in the Development Cooperation Charter approved by the Cabinet in June, and also confirmed their intention to accelerate cooperation in improving communication networks and cybersecurity measures, which are essential for the development of the digital economy, and attended signing ceremonies for seven bilateral cooperation documents, including in digital and energy areas. Furthermore, at the Foreign Ministers' Meeting in January, the Foreign Ministers' telephone call in October, and the Foreign Ministers' Meeting in December, the two ministers confirmed that Japan and Cambodia would cooperate in the regional and international arenas.

(3) Singapore

Singapore is the most economically advanced country within ASEAN. Based on its omnidirectional foreign policy, the country maintains friendly relations with major countries including the U.S. and China.

In Singapore, the People's Action Party (PAP), led by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, holds more than

90% of the seats from the 2020 general elections, and, with the basis of a stable political situation, has been pursuing policies to address the aging population, unemployment, and housing. In April 2022, the PAP chose Minister of Finance Lawrence Wong as a candidate for the next Prime Minister. In November 2023, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced that he would step down and hand over power to Minister of Finance Wong by November 21, 2024, the 70th anniversary of the PAP.

Regarding Japan-Singapore relations, Prime Minister Kishida visited Singapore in May, and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong visited Japan in December during the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit, following mutual visits between the leaders of Japan and Singapore since the previous year. On these occasions, summit meetings were held, and views were exchanged on further strengthening bilateral relations and on the various issues facing the region and the international community. The Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Republic of Singapore concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology was also signed in June.

The two countries have worked together to provide developing countries with technical assistance through the "Japan-Singapore Partnership Program for the 21st Century (JSPP21)," which was signed in 1997. To date, they have provided approximately 410 training courses with roughly 7,400 participants from ASEAN countries and other regions (as of the end of December 2023). The Japan Creative Centre (JCC), which was opened in Singapore in 2009 as a platform to promote Japanese culture, hosted a variety of outreaches and events.

(4) Thailand

Thailand is one of the original member states of ASEAN, which was born from the "Bangkok Declaration" in 1967. It is located in the center of the Mekong region and is a geopolitically important country. Thailand has become a major production center for Japanese companies, including the automobile industry, and today Thailand is an indispensable part of the Japanese economy as a part of the global supply chain, with close to 6,000 Japanese companies operating in Thailand and more than 70,000 Japanese nationals living in Thailand.

COLUMN

The 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Cambodia



Japan and Cambodia established diplomatic relations in 1953. The following year, in 1954, Cambodia renounced its right to claim reparations from Japan for World War II, and in 1955 Japan invited His Majesty King Sihanouk (Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs) as a State Guest, passed a resolution of gratitude in the House of Representatives, and signed the Treaty of Amity between Japan and Cambodia.

Subsequently, there were periods when exchanges stagnated under the Khmer Rouge regime and during the civil war, but since the late 1980s, Japan's significant involvement in Cambodia's peace process has allowed the two countries to build a strong foundation of trust. Japan has contributed to Cambodia's nation building and reconstruction through the first deployment of Japan Self-Defense Forces in the UN Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) and development cooperation in diverse fields such as backbone infrastructure. Cambodia's 500 Riel banknote features the *Kizuna* Bridge and the *Tsubasa* Bridge, which were built with the support of the Government of Japan, along with the Japanese flag. In recent years, alongside Cambodia's economic growth, private sector investment has flourished and people-to-people exchanges have expanded in various fields, further deepening the relationship between the two countries.

In 2023, the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, Japan-Cambodia relations were upgraded to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," and the public and private sectors worked together to carry out numerous commemorative events. To ensure that the 70th commemorative events were fruitful, an Executive Committee was established with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia and the Embassy of Japan in Cambodia taking the lead to coordinate closely. For the commemorative logo, the design by Sroeu Menglong was selected from among the many entries that were submitted. His design is based on the red and blue of the two countries' national flags, with the number 7 featuring a design known as "Jahva" that is used as a part of the roofs of Cambodian temples, and the number 0 featuring cherry blossoms (*Sakura*), Japan's national flower, inside, and the design was well received. The National Bank of Cambodia also issued a commemorative coin with the logo. In addition, about 70 commemorative events were carried out by private organizations in Cambodia.

On January 9, the anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, Prime Minister Kishida exchanged congratulatory messages with Prime Minister Hun Sen and Foreign Minister Hayashi with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Prak Sokhonn. Furthermore, later that month Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Prak Sokhonn visited Japan as a guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a meaningful Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held. In September, a Japan-Cambodia Summit Meeting was held between Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Hun Manet, who took office in August.

In February, the *Kizuna* Festival, Cambodia's largest event for introducing Japanese culture, was held, and singer and actress MINAMINO Yoko, serving as the goodwill ambassador from Japan for the "70th anniversary of Japan-Cambodia friendship," shared the stage with artist, song-writer and producer Laura Mam, the goodwill ambassador from Cambodia, thereby further enhancing the momentum for promoting friendship. The Embassy of Japan in Cambodia also held a Japanese speech contest, a *Tanabata* festival, and an orchestra performance to introduce Japanese culture and foster familiarity with Japan, all of which were great successes. Additionally, in cooperation with the media and academic institutions, Ambassador of Japan to Cambodia Ueno also gave a number of lectures on Japan-Cambodia relations. With the closing reception held in December, the 70th anniversary commemorative events closed as a resounding success. Japan will continue to work to further deepen the bilateral relationship as well as the bonds between the peoples of the two countries, which were strengthened throughout the year.



Japan-Cambodia Summit Meeting (September 7, Indonesia;
Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)



Kizuna Festival (February 23, Phnom Penh, Cambodia)

2023 was a year of major changes in Thailand's domestic politics. Following the dissolution of the lower house of the National Legislative Assembly in March, a lower house election was held in May. As a result of the election, the former ruling and opposition parties formed a coalition framework before the election, Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin was elected from the Pheu Thai Party of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, and a new government was inaugurated in September. Subsequently, high-level exchanges between Japan and Thailand were actively conducted to build relations with the new government. In October, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited four Southeast Asian countries, including Thailand (along with Brunei, Viet Nam, and Laos) on her first bilateral visit since assuming her position, and met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Parnpree Bahiddha-nukara. In November, on the occasion of the APEC Leaders' Meeting that was held in San Francisco, U.S., Prime Minister Kishida held his first Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Srettha since the inauguration of the new administration in Thailand, and then once again met with Prime Minister Srettha when he visited Japan in December to attend the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit, and the two leaders confirmed the strengthening of cooperation between the two countries in the economic field.

(5) Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste, the first country that achieved independence in the 21st century, is strategically important in the Indo-Pacific region, and is situated in a critical sea lane between Australia and Indonesia. Japan established diplomatic relations with Timor-Leste upon its independence in 2002. In 2022, the country celebrated the 20th anniversary of its independence, has realized peace and stability with the support of the international community, and has been building the nation based on democracy. Elections for the National Parliament were held in May 2023, and a new government led by Prime Minister Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão was inaugurated in July. As its economy is highly dependent on natural resources such as petroleum and natural gas, the country has been working on industrial diversification as a matter of

the highest national priority. On the diplomatic front, Timor-Leste is continuing to work in coordination with relevant countries toward joining ASEAN and the WTO, and in May, ASEAN adopted a roadmap for Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN.

In July, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TAKEI Shunsuke became the first foreign ministerial-level official to visit Timor-Leste since the inauguration of the new Gusmão administration. During his visit, he conveyed his congratulations to Prime Minister Gusmão on assuming the office of Prime Minister and paid courtesy calls to President Jose Ramos-Horta and others. In September, Prime Minister Kishida held informal talks with Prime Minister Gusmão on the occasion of the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings, and conveyed that Japan would continue to support Timor-Leste's efforts to join ASEAN. In December, Prime Minister Kishida held a Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Gusmão, who was visiting Japan for the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit, and expressed his intention to upgrade the bilateral relationship to a "Comprehensive Partnership toward Sustainable Growth and Development" and to further promote it. Additionally, in July, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Bendito dos Santos Freitas, where the two ministers exchanged views on bilateral relations and on various issues in the region and the international community. Japan has continued to support Timor-Leste since even before its independence, and has maintained good relations with the country. In August, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Government of Japan signed an Exchange of Notes on grant aid for the national broadcasting station in Timor-Leste, and in September, Kochi Prefecture began accepting technical intern trainees from Timor-Leste for the first time.

(6) The Philippines

The Philippines is a maritime nation situated at a strategic point on sea lanes, and shares strategic interests with Japan. Although the Philippines' economy experienced negative growth in 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19, in 2022 the country's economy recorded a growth rate of 7.6%, its highest in the past 46 years, making it one of the fastest growing economies in

Asia and the world. Now in his second year in office, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. continues to prioritize improving the quality of lives of the people through food, education, health, employment, and social security, as well as investments in public infrastructure. As for the Mindanao Peace Process, despite the delays seen in the decommissioning and disarmament work with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), based on the amended Bangsamoro Organic Law, the effort to conceive an autonomous government is continuing toward 2025. In July, President Marcos Jr. lifted the national state of emergency in the Mindanao region.

Since President Marcos's visit to Japan in February, there have been numerous high-level visits between Japan and the Philippines, and the strategic partnership is being further strengthened. In November, Prime Minister Kishida visited the Philippines for the first time since assuming the office of Prime Minister and held a Summit Meeting with President Marcos, and also delivered a policy speech to a joint session of the Philippine Senate and House of Representatives, which was the first such speech by a Prime Minister of Japan. In terms of security, the two countries signed and exchanged notes on the provision of a coastal radar system, which is the first Official Security Assistance (OSA) programme to be implemented since the establishment of OSA (See the Special Feature on page 219), and also concurred to begin negotiations on a Japan-Philippines Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA). Furthermore, with regard to economics and people-to-people exchanges, the 14th Meeting of the Japan-Philippines High Level Joint Committee on Infrastructure Development and Economic Cooperation was held in August, where there were discussions on how to strongly support the Philippines' entry into the upper-middle income states and its "Built, Better, More" infrastructure policy. In addition to these kinds of bilateral cooperation, Japan-U.S.-Philippines trilateral cooperation is also making strides, with discussions underway to solidify Japan-U.S.-Philippines cooperation, such as through the Trilateral Meeting Between the National Security Advisors of the U.S., Japan, and the Philippines in June; the Japan-U.S.-Philippines Foreign Ministers' Meetings in July and September; and the Japan-U.S.-Philippines leader's level informal talks in September.

(7) Brunei

Its abundance in natural resources has enabled Brunei to realize a high economic standard and generous social welfare, and as such, the country enjoys political and economic stability. Under Brunei's constitutional monarchy, the Sultan concurrently serves as the Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economy, Minister of Defense and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Located in the center of Southeast Asia, Brunei is one of the countries involved in the issue of the South China Sea and has adopted a balanced diplomacy built on the pillar of promoting ASEAN unity and centrality.

Brunei's economy is supported by natural gas production and oil refining ventures, but the Government of Brunei is aiming for economic diversification to avoid overreliance on energy resources.

Japan and Brunei established diplomatic relations in 1984, and the two countries are developing excellent bilateral relations in various areas. In October, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Brunei, where she had an audience with His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien; she also held a Japan-Brunei Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs II Dato Seri Setia Haji Erywan bin Pehin Datu Pekerma Jaya Haji Mohd Yusof, and at the Foreign Ministers' Meeting, the two ministers exchanged views on bilateral cooperation and on various issues facing the region and the international community. In December, Prime Minister Kishida held a Summit Meeting with His Majesty Sultan Bolkiah, who was visiting Japan for the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit, and exchanged views on deepening bilateral relations in



Japan-Brunei Foreign Ministers' Meeting (October 9, Brunei)

anticipation of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 2024. Japan and Brunei are also continuing to build a close relationship between the imperial and royal families. Brunei is an important country for the stable energy supply to Japan. Around 70% of Brunei's liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports are bound for Japan, and LNG from Brunei makes up around 5% of the total LNG import to Japan.

(8) Viet Nam

Located next to sea lanes in the South China Sea and sharing a long border with China, Viet Nam is a geopolitically important country. Given that the country embraces the third largest population in Southeast Asia, and is experiencing a surge in the number of people in middle-income brackets, Viet Nam is a promising market. At the same time, since the COVID-19 pandemic, the movement to diversify supply chains has been gaining momentum, and foreign firms, including Japanese companies, have continued moving their production bases to Viet Nam. The country is promoting GX (Green Transformation) and DX (Digital Transformation) with the aim of joining the ranks of developed countries by 2045 and of becoming carbon neutral by 2050, and is currently striving to achieve stable economic growth through the stabilization of the macroeconomy including control of inflation, the promotion of foreign investment by the development of infrastructure and the improvement of the investment environment. Viet Nam's economic growth rate from 2020 to 2021 fell to around the 2% level due to severe lockdowns caused by the spread of COVID-19, but, in 2022, it achieved an economic growth rate of 8.02% due to the shift to a "living with COVID-19" policy. Viet Nam's economic growth rate in 2023 is expected to be between 4.7% and 5.8%.

Japan and Viet Nam established diplomatic relations on September 21, 1973, and in 2023, the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, there were numerous visits by dignitaries, including visits to Japan by President Vo Van Thuong and his wife and by Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh (See the Column on page 79). In November, when President Thuong visited Japan, the two countries, which have been advancing cooperation in various fields, concurred to elevate the



Japan-Viet Nam Summit Meeting (November 27, Tokyo; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

Viet Nam-Japan relationship to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity in Asia and the World," and issued a Joint Statement. At the Summit Meeting, the two leaders confirmed (a) the promotion of cooperation in the security field through defense exchanges, defense equipment and technology transfers, and Official Security Assistance (OSA), as well as further strengthening cooperation in the field of maritime security; (b) the promotion of cooperation in the fields of Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC), GX, and DX; cooperation in strengthening the resilience of supply chains through the development of supporting industries; and the expansion of the investment environment; (c) the promotion of cooperation to develop high-quality human resources and to resolve issues surrounding Vietnamese technical intern trainees, workers, and students. In addition, with regard to regional and international issues, the two leaders emphasized the importance of the principles of a free and open international order based on the rule of law and upholding the UN Charter. Regarding people-to-people exchanges, more than 500 commemorative events were held in both countries to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Viet Nam. In addition to the two countries respectively holding Viet Nam festivals and Japan festivals, in September "Princess Anio," an opera celebrating the 50th anniversary of Japan-Viet Nam diplomatic relations and based on the love story between Nagasaki merchant ARAKI Sotaro and Princess Ngoc Hoa, premiered in Viet Nam, and then in November a premiere performance was held in Japan. Furthermore, the number of Vietnamese residing in Japan, primarily

COLUMN

The 50th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Viet Nam

The year 2023 marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Viet Nam. Since Japan and Viet Nam established diplomatic relations in September 1973, the relationship between the two countries has become closer than ever, and is now developing further in all areas, including politics, economy, and people-to-people exchanges.

Dating back, the friendly relationship between Japan and Viet Nam has been cultivated over a long history of exchanges that spans more than a thousand years. The first exchange began in the eighth century, when a Vietnamese Buddhist monk visited Japan. From the 16th to 17th century, trade routes were opened and the city of Hoi An, located in central Viet Nam, prospered as an international trading port, with visits by many trade vessels from Japan. A Japanese town was also built and flourished, with Japanese merchants living there. During the *Đông Du* (go-to-east-for-study) movement in the 19th century, many Vietnamese people came to Japan to study, and a strong friendship was fostered between the peoples of the two countries.

As such, exchanges between Japan and Viet Nam have been built over many years, and in recent years there have been a remarkable number of people-to-people exchanges. In 2012, there were about 50,000 Vietnamese people in Japan, and by 2022, this number had increased tenfold to about 500,000 Vietnamese people in Japan, spanning a diverse range of occupations, including technical intern trainees, people with specific skills, students, and nurses and care worker candidates under the Japan-Viet Nam Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA). With the declining birthrate and aging population in Japan, Vietnamese human resources are helping to support Japan's economy and society and are making great contributions. Currently, there are about 20,000 Japanese residents living in Viet Nam, working hand-in-hand with Vietnamese people and living lives that seamlessly blend into their local communities. Furthermore, there is very active traffic between the two countries: in 2019, about one million Japanese tourists visited Viet Nam, and about 500,000 Vietnamese tourists visited Japan. Thanks to this, Japanese manga and anime are popular among young people in Viet Nam, and Japanese foods such as *sushi* and *yakitori* are also popular, making Japan a familiar country to many Vietnamese people. In 2023, many cultural exchange events were also held in commemoration of the 50th anniversary, thereby providing even more opportunities to learn more about each other's culture for Japanese and Vietnamese people.

High-level visits between the two countries have also frequently been taking place since Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet's visit to Japan in 1993. In 2017, Viet Nam was the last country that Their Majesties the Emperor Emeritus and Empress Emerita visited as Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress.

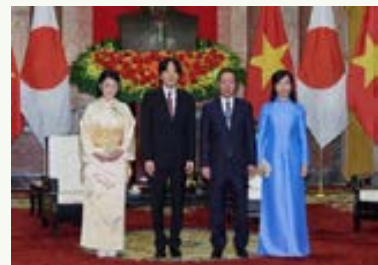
In 2023, Japan was visited by President Vo Van Thuong and his spouse (on an Official Visit in November) and Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh (for the G7 Outreach Meeting in May and for the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation in December). Many dignitaries from Japan also visited Viet Nam in 2023, including Their Imperial Highnesses Crown Prince and Crown Princess Akishino (September), President of the House of Councillors OTSUJI Hidehisa (September), and Foreign Minister Kamikawa (October).

These exchanges at various levels have continued to deepen the trust between Japan and Viet Nam. The existence of people at a wide range of levels who are passionate about cooperating for the sake of both countries and about deepening the countries' friendship is a major driving force behind the development of relations between the two countries.

The relationship between Japan and Viet Nam has become one in which both countries truly need each other based on trust and friendship that have been built up over many years. 2023 is therefore a year to affirm the bonds between Japan and Viet Nam so as to build another 50 years of friendly relations.



A performance of the new opera Princess Anio, which commemorates the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Viet Nam (September, Hanoi, Viet Nam; Photo: Princess Anio Project Executive Committee)



Their Imperial Highnesses Crown Prince and Crown Princess Akishino taking a commemorative photo with President Vo Van Thuong and his spouse (September, Hanoi, Viet Nam; Photo: Imperial Household Agency)

technical intern trainees, is continuing to increase, from approximately 40,000 in 2011 to over 520,000 by the end of June 2023, making Vietnamese nationals the second largest number of foreign residents in Japan by country after China. With the Treaty between Japan and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters also taking effect in August 2022, cooperation in the field of mutual criminal assistance is also progressing even further.

(9) Malaysia

Comprised of the Peninsular Malaysia of the Malay Peninsula and the East Malaysia of Borneo, Malaysia is a geopolitically important country facing the South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca that is situated in a crucial spot in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Furthermore, it is a federal state comprised of 13 states and three federal territories, and also a multiethnic state comprised of Bumiputra (Malay including indigenous peoples) (70%), Chinese (23%) and Indian people (7%), among others.

The Anwar administration, which took office after the general election in November 2022, has shown an emphasis on the economy, with Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar himself serving as Minister of Finance, and is pursuing Malaysia's traditional omnidirectional diplomacy in foreign affairs.

In November 2023, Prime Minister Kishida visited Malaysia for the first time since assuming the office of Prime Minister and held a Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Anwar. In December, Prime Minister Kishida held another Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Anwar, who was visiting Japan for the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit, and the two leaders concurred to elevate Japan-Malaysia relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

In the field of human resources development, through the Look East Policy, which was begun by Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad in 1982, more than 26,000 Malaysian people have studied or have been trained in Japan so far. The two countries have been cooperating in making the Malaysia Japan International Institute of Technology (MJIT), which was opened in September 2011, a base for Japanese-style engineering education in ASEAN countries. In addition, in order

to further contribute to the development of human resources who will bear the future of Malaysia, preparations are being made to establish a branch campus of the University of Tsukuba in Malaysia, and, if realized, it will be the first overseas branch campus to be established by a Japanese university. On the economic front, roughly 1,600 Japanese companies have been operating in Malaysia, which demonstrates a continued close relationship between the two countries.

(10) Myanmar

Since the coup d'état by the Myanmar military on February 1, 2021, many civilians have died as a result of armed suppression by the Myanmar military, and in some areas, there have been intermittent clashes between the Myanmar military and ethnic armed organizations, the People's Defense Forces (PDF) and others. On the political front, the Political Parties Registration Law was announced in January, and in March, the registration for the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi was virtually cancelled. Additionally, the state of emergency, which was supposed to last for two years after the coup d'état, has been extended twice (until January 31, 2024), and the situation is deteriorating.

On February 1, 2023, two years after the coup d'état, the Government of Japan released a statement by Foreign Minister Hayashi that expressed serious concerns that the state of emergency had been extended without taking steps toward achieving political progress, such as the release of all detainees, and once again strongly urged the Myanmar military to take concrete actions to immediately stop the violence, release those who are detained, and swiftly restore Myanmar's democratic political system. Furthermore, when the NLD was deregistered, the Government of Japan released a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Secretary expressing serious concern that the military's actions go against a peaceful resolution of the situation, which Japan has consistently called for, and will make it even more difficult to improve the situation.

In order to break through the current situation, Japan has been cooperating with the international community and giving maximum support to ASEAN's efforts, including Indonesia, as ASEAN Chair, based

on the belief that it is important to achieve concrete results, especially ASEAN's "Five-Point Consensus."²⁸

At the UN, Japan has been cooperating with the international community by co-sponsoring a resolution at the Human Rights Council on the human rights situation in Myanmar in April and by co-sponsoring a resolution at the UN General Assembly in December.

So far, in order to improve the humanitarian situation in Myanmar, which continues to deteriorate, the Government of Japan has actively provided humanitarian assistance that directly benefits the people of Myanmar. Since the coup d'état on February 1, 2021, Japan has provided more than 109.5 million U.S. dollars in humanitarian assistance (as of the end of December 2023). On February 28, the Government of Japan decided to provide additional humanitarian assistance totaling approximately 60.3 million U.S. dollars through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international organizations to provide food, medical supplies, shelter, and water and sanitation infrastructure to people in Myanmar in need.

(11) Laos

Laos is a landlocked country bordering China, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Viet Nam, and therefore is a key country for Mekong connectivity. In 2023, Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone continued to address economic and fiscal issues on the domestic front, and, at the 6th Ordinary Session of the National Assembly's 9th Legislature held in October, he stated that he would continue to implement measures to stabilize the macroeconomy, control inflation to prevent an economic crisis, and stabilize prices and living costs. He also stated that Laos has both public debt and publicly guaranteed debt, and that the country is committed to continuing to repay its debts, particularly its external debts, and to prevent a default.

In May, President Thongloun Sisoulith visited Japan for a Summit Meeting, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Saleumxay Kommasith also met with Foreign Minister Hayashi. In October, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Laos, and in

November, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Saleumxay visited Japan, and a Japan-Laos Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held on each occasion. At both meetings, it was confirmed that the "Strategic Partnership" between the two countries would be further expanded in anticipation of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Laos in 2025. During Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Saleumxay's visit to Japan in November, the two ministers signed and exchanged notes concerning Japan's Cultural Grant Assistance up to the amount of 4.171 billion yen for "the Project for the Reconstruction of the Chao Anouvong Stadium." In December, Prime Minister Kishida met with Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone, who was visiting Japan for the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit, and exchanged views on cooperation toward 2024 when Laos will hold the ASEAN Presidency and on deepening bilateral relations toward the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Laos in 2025.

5 South Asia

(1) India

India is now the world's most populous country, with the fifth largest economy, and is increasingly strengthening its presence in the international community. In terms of its economy, India has been achieving steady economic growth through various economic initiatives, including "Make in India." In diplomatic relations, India has been actively developing diplomacy, primarily in the Indo-Pacific region, under the "Act East" policy that it has laid down. In addition, as the G20 Presidency in 2023, India has been positioning itself as a voice for the "Global South" and is increasingly exerting influence in the international arena as a global power.

Japan and India are the two largest democratic countries in Asia, sharing common fundamental values as well as strategic interests. Under the "Japan-India

²⁸ The Five-Point Consensus was announced at the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting held on April 24, 2021. It calls for (1) immediate cessation of violence, (2) commencement of constructive dialogue among all parties concerned, (3) mediation of the dialogue process by a special envoy of the ASEAN Chair, (4) providing humanitarian assistance through the AHA Centre, and (5) visiting Myanmar to meet with all parties concerned by the ASEAN special envoy and delegation.

Special Strategic and Global Partnership,” the two countries have broadly deepened cooperation in their economies, security, people-to-people exchanges, etc. Additionally, India is an important partner in realizing a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP),” and multilateral cooperation, such as between Japan, Australia, India, and the U.S., is steadily progressing. The deepening of bilateral and multilateral cooperation between Japan, which faces the Pacific Ocean, and India, which is located in the center of the Indian Ocean, will greatly contribute to the peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region. The Japan-India relationship is blessed with the greatest potential for development of any bilateral relationship in the world, and its importance is increasing as the uncertainty of the existing international order increases. India is also an indispensable player in building the economic order in the Indo-Pacific region, and in that sense, it is expected that India will return to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement in the future.

In 2023, Japan and India had frequent high-level exchanges of views, including summit meetings. A Japan-India Foreign Ministers’ Meeting was held in India in March on the occasion of the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Foreign Ministers’ Meeting. In addition, during his visit to India in March, Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Narendra Modi confirmed their commitment to discuss and work together on various issues in the international community as Japan and India serve as the G7 Presidency and the G20 Presidency, respectively. With regard to bilateral relations, the two leaders discussed the progress they had made so far and future cooperation in the fields of security, economic cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges. At the Japan-India Summit Meeting held during the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, the two leaders shared a recognition on the importance of FOIP and confirmed that they would advance cooperation in various fields. In addition to the 15th Japan-India Foreign Ministers’ Strategic Dialogue that was held in New Delhi in July, a Japan-India Summit Meeting was held at the G20 New Delhi Summit in September and a Japan-India Foreign Ministers’ Meeting was held at the UN General Assembly in New York in September. Furthermore, a number of working-level discussions have been held between Japan and



Japan-India Summit Meeting (March 20, Delhi, India; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

India, and in September, the 16th Joint Committee Meeting on Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Railway and the Fifth Japan-India Cyber Dialogue were held.

(2) Pakistan

Pakistan is situated in a strategic location connecting Asia and the Middle East, and its political stability and economic development are essential for the stability and growth of the region. The country has a population of more than 200 million and approximately 65% of the total population is under 30 years old, which makes its economic potential high, although the government faces challenges in its fiscal situation and in overcoming low growth.

In terms of foreign relations, the India-Pakistan relationship has remained tense. Under the “All Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership,” Pakistan’s relationship with China has been enhanced in a wide range of fields, including the construction of an economic corridor between China and Pakistan (CPEC), which is an important constituent element of China’s “Belt and Road” initiative. On the domestic political front, the coalition government led by Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif dissolved the lower house of the National Assembly in August, and a caretaker government led by Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar was formed to oversee elections. For the general election in February 2024, Japan dispatched an election observer mission led by Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan WADA Mitsuhiro.

As for relations with Japan, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a Japan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in July when Minister of Foreign Affairs Bilawal Bhutto Zardari visited Japan. At the meeting, Foreign Minister

Hayashi welcomed Minister of Foreign Affairs Bhutto's visit to Japan, the first visit by a Pakistani Foreign Minister in four years, and the two ministers concurred to further develop the two countries' traditional friendship in all fields. Prior to this meeting, the 12th Japan-Pakistan Vice-Ministerial-level Political Consultation was held in June.

In recent years, Japan has provided grant aid to Pakistan, mainly in the fields of health, water and sanitation, education, and disaster prevention. In 2022, Japan provided emergency relief supplies and emergency grant aid as support for the flood damage that had occurred that year. In addition, at the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan that was held in Geneva in January, Japan announced that it would provide approximately 77 million U.S. dollars in assistance, including in the areas of disaster prevention, health and medical care, and agriculture, and has been steadily implementing this aid.

(3) Bangladesh

Bangladesh, in which Muslims account for around 90% of the population, is located in the Bay of Bengal, at the intersection between India and ASEAN, and in recent years has been experiencing sustained and stable growth (economic growth rate of 7.1% in 2022). With a population of around 170 million people, Bangladesh has drawn attention as a production base with abundant high-quality labor and as a potential market with considerable infrastructure demand, and the number of Japanese affiliated companies developing business in the country has increased from 61 in 2005 to 302 in 2022. Securing a stable supply of electric power as well as infrastructure improvement remain challenges for foreign companies investing in the country, and Japan has also been supporting its development through the provision of yen loans and other means. Additionally, with the deterioration in peace and order in Rakhine State of Myanmar since August 2017, more than 700,000 displaced persons have flooded into Bangladesh (as of December 2023), but their return has not yet been realized. There are concerns that their prolonged displacement will put a growing burden on the host community and that local peace and order will deteriorate. In domestic affairs, the 12th general election was held in January 2024 and



Japan-Bangladesh Summit Meeting (April 26, Tokyo; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

the Bangladesh Awami League, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, will continue to lead the government.

As for relations with Japan, Prime Minister Hasina made an Official Visit to Japan in April and then had a Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Kishida. On this occasion, the two leaders announced that they would elevate the bilateral relationship to a "Strategic Partnership." Under this partnership, the two leaders also concurred on advancing cooperation in various fields, including the commencement of negotiations on the Agreement concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology; strengthening security cooperation, including through the use of the "Official Security Assistance (OSA);" promoting joint studies on a possible Japan-Bangladesh Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA); strengthening cooperation under the "Industrial Value Chain" concept that connects the Bay of Bengal to the North Eastern region of India; the first bilateral friendship city affiliation agreement; and the resuming dispatches of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers of JICA. In July, Japan-Bangladesh Foreign Ministers' Meeting was also held during the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings that were held in Indonesia. In addition to the 4th Japan-Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Level Consultation in February, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs TAKAGI Kei visited Bangladesh in May to attend the 6th Indian Ocean Conference and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs KOMURA Masahiro visited Bangladesh in October to attend the opening ceremony in Dhaka City for Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport's Terminal 3. In November, as one of the OSA's first fiscal year projects, there was also a signing and exchange of notes for the

OSA grant aid on the provision of patrol boats (See the Special Feature on page 219).

(4) Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is situated in a strategic location on the sea lanes in the Indian Ocean, and its geopolitical importance is note-worthy. President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who was inaugurated in July 2022 after the resignation of the previous president following an economic crisis, has held discussions with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to receive IMF assistance, and as a result, the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) with Sri Lanka was approved by the IMF Executive Board in March 2023, and the first contribution of approximately 330 million U.S. dollars was made. The Government of Sri Lanka is currently working on various reforms that are required by the EFF program. As for Sri Lanka's debt restructuring, an official creditor committee was launched in April under the co-chairmanship of Japan, France, and India. Since the first meeting in May, discussions have been held at various levels, and in November a basic agreement on debt restructuring was reached between the official creditor committee and the Government of Sri Lanka. On the economic front, Sri Lanka is gradually recovering from the 2022 economic crisis, and its inflation rate has fallen from 70% in September 2022 to 1.3% in September 2023.

In terms of relations with Japan, in February, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TAKEI Shunsuke attended the ceremony for the 75th Anniversary of Sri Lanka's Independence. Additionally, in May, President Wickremesinghe visited Japan and held a Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Kishida, where the two leaders confirmed the importance of transparent and fair debt restructuring. Furthermore, in July, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Sri Lanka, and in October, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Komura visited Sri Lanka to participate in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Council of Ministers Meeting.

(5) Nepal

Nepal is an inland state in South Asia between the great powers of China and India, and has been moving forward as a democratic country since the promulgation of its new constitution in 2015. In domestic affairs,

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal assumed his post in December 2022 following the results of federal elections in November for the House of Representatives. Economically, Nepal is gradually recovering from the negative growth caused by the effects of COVID-19 pandemic, with an economic growth rate of 5.6% for 2021-2022, but escaping from low growth has remained a challenge.

As for Nepal's relationship with Japan, the two countries have traditionally built friendly relations through people-to-people exchanges such as mountaineering, and many Nepalese people live in Japan and are active in various fields. In April, the 4th Japan-Nepal Political Dialogue between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs was held. Japan has also been a major donor country to Nepal for many years, providing economic cooperation in a variety of fields, including the three priority areas of poverty reduction, disaster prevention and climate change countermeasures, and strengthening democratization. In particular, with regard to strengthening democracy in Nepal, where transition from a monarchy to a federal democracy took place in 2008, Japan has continued to provide support toward the consolidation of democratization and the strengthening of governance, such as by dispatching experts to assist in the improvement of legal system and the capacity of the media sector for peace building and promoting democratization, among others.

(6) Bhutan

Bhutan is a landlocked country located between China and India, and has close ties with Japan with a rich history of exchanges between the Japanese Imperial and Bhutanese Royal families. Bhutan sets Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a guideline of the administration and is working on the priority issues of reducing poverty, improving the quality of healthcare and education, gender equality, the preservation of the environment, culture and traditions, stabilization of the macroeconomy, etc., under the 12th Five-Year Plan (from July 2018 until June 2023). In domestic affairs, a general election for the lower house of Parliament was held in January 2024, in which the People's Democratic Party won, resulting in a change of government, and former Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay was then inaugurated for his second term as Prime Minister since 2014. In

foreign affairs, Bhutan only has diplomatic relations with 54 countries, including Japan, the EU, and neighboring countries, and has close ties with India in areas such as national defense.

In its relations with Japan, Minister of the Environment NISHIMURA Akihiro visited Bhutan in July.

(7) The Maldives

Situated in a strategically important location on sea lanes, the Maldives is an important partner to Japan in realizing FOIP. The Maldives' primary industries are fishery and tourism, which account for about 30% of its GDP, and although it was affected by the spread of COVID-19, the country's per-capita GDP has reached the highest level in the South Asia region. Domestically, following the presidential election held in September, Mohamed Muizzu was inaugurated as President in November.

In terms of relations with Japan, in April, the 4th Round of Japan-Maldives Policy Dialogue was held, and in May, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulla Shahid visited Japan and had a Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Foreign Minister Hayashi. In July, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited the Maldives and met with Foreign Minister Shahid, and the two ministers concurred to develop the bilateral cooperation in wide-ranging fields. In September, an election observer mission led by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Takei visited the Maldives for the first round of the Maldives' presidential election. In November, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Komura attended the Maldives' presidential inauguration as a Special Envoy of Prime Minister Kishida.



Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Komura pays a courtesy call to President Mohamed Muizzu as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan (November 18, Maldives)

6 Oceania

(1) Australia

A Brief Summary and Overview

In the Foreign Policy White Paper issued by the Australian Government in November 2017, it was announced that as the guidelines for the foreign policy of the next 10 years, Australia will, among others, promote an open, inclusive, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, oppose protectionism, promote and protect international rules, while also strengthening cooperation with partners, including Japan. This foreign policy basically has continued to be upheld even after Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (Labor Party) replaced Prime Minister Scott Morrison (Coalition) in May 2022.

With the region facing a variety of issues, the “Special Strategic Partnership” between Japan and Australia, which share fundamental values and strategic interests, is more important than ever. The two countries' strategic visions toward maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific region are aligned in wide-ranging areas. With the close coordination between the Prime Ministers and between the Foreign Ministers serving as the basis, the two countries have been further deepening multi-layered cooperation and collaboration in all areas toward stability and prosperity of the international community.

Furthermore, Japan is not just steadily strengthening Japan-Australia bilateral relations, but also multilateral coordination such as Japan-U.S.-Australia and Japan-U.S.-Australia-India relations. In particular, in July, a Japan-Australia-New Zealand-ROK Leaders' Meeting was held, during which the four leaders issued a Joint Statement strongly condemning the ballistic missile launch by North Korea that had taken place immediately prior to the meeting; exchanged views on cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region; and concurred on the importance of deepening cooperation with ASEAN and the Pacific Island countries.

Both Japan and Australia are exercising leadership in promoting free trade, including the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic

Partnership (RCEP) Agreement, and in building a free and fair economic order based on the rule of law. Australia is the fifth largest trading partner for Japan, and Japan is the second largest trading partner for Australia. The two countries are further developing mutually complementary economic relations through the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which marks the ninth anniversary of its effectuation, the CPTPP that entered into force in December 2018, and the RCEP Agreement that entered into force in January 2022.

In their March 2023 telephone call, Prime Minister Albanese gave an explanation about AUKUS²⁹, Prime Minister Kishida stated his consistent support for the initiative, and the two leaders concurred to continue to strengthen coordination with the US, their common ally, and the UK, a like-minded country, toward the realization of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).” In May as well, Prime Minister Kishida held informal talks with Prime Minister Albanese, who had visited Japan to participate in the G7 Hiroshima Summit. In September, at the Japan-Australia Leader’s Meeting, when the two leaders exchanged views on Japan’s handling of the ALPS-treated water, Prime Minister Albanese commented that Japan had been working in a responsible manner and in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and commended positively on the measures that Japan had taken. In November, at the Japan-Australia Leader’s Meeting, the two leaders exchanged views on various issues in the Indo-Pacific region, as well as on pressing international issues, including the situation surrounding Israel and Palestine, and also affirmed that they support sustainable and resilient development of the Pacific Island countries.

In July, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a Foreign Ministers’ Meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs Penny Wong, where the two ministers confirmed that Japan and Australia share a common strategic view and direction to peace and stability in the region, and concurred to work closely together in the framework of Japan-Australia and Japan-Australia-U.S. and steadily implement concrete cooperation. At the September Foreign Ministers’ Meeting immediately after her



Japan-Australia Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (September 19, New York, U.S.)

appointment as Foreign Minister, Foreign Minister Kamikawa stated that she would look forward to working closely with Minister Wong to further deepen the “Special Strategic Partnership” between Japan and Australia, as well as realize FOIP. The foreign ministers of Japan and Australia have also held close and timely talks on various issues facing the international community. In an October telephone call, the two ministers discussed the situation in the Middle East, and in November, during informal talks with Minister for Foreign Affairs Wong, who was stopping by Japan after a visit to China, the two ministers exchanged views on various issues in the Indo-Pacific region in light of Prime Minister Albanese’s visit to China, and concurred that Japan and Australia will continue to work closely together.

Through such frequent high-level dialogues, Japan and Australia have communicated and contributed as the core of cooperation among like-minded countries in various fields as described below.

B Cooperation in the Security Field

To ensure peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region, Japan and Australia have continued to steadily strengthen and expand cooperation in the field of security.

In particular, the Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement entered into force in August. This is the first reciprocal access agreement that Japan has concluded. It is expected that the entry into force of the Agreement will facilitate the conduct of cooperative activities between the defense forces of the two countries, further

²⁹ A framework for security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region that was launched in September 2021 by Australia, the UK, and the U.S.

promote bilateral security and defense cooperation, and enable Japan and Australia to further contribute to the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific region. At the Japan-Australia Leader's Meeting in September, the two leaders welcomed progress in defense cooperation, including the joint exercises involving F-35 fighter jets visiting each country under the Agreement, and also concurred on strengthening concrete cooperation, guided by the new Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation³⁰ signed in 2022.

C Economic Relations

As shown by Japan and Australia spearheading the CPTPP, which entered into force in December 2018, the two countries are working closely and demonstrating leadership in promoting the regional free trade order, including the RCEP Agreement, as well as in building a free and fair economic order based on the rule of law. At the Japan-Australia Leader's Meeting in November, the two leaders had candid discussions on the CPTPP from a strategic perspective and confirmed that they will continue to closely work together.

Mainly industrial products such as automobiles are being exported from Japan to Australia, while mainly energy resources such as coal and natural gas, and agricultural products such as beef are being imported into Japan from Australia, in mutually complementary economic relations that have been developed steadily over the years. In particular, in recent years new cooperation efforts have been progressing, such as hydrogen-related efforts. At the Japan-Australia Leader's Meeting in September, the two leaders confirmed that both countries would continue to engage in close dialogues in the fields of resources and energy and concurred to work together on decarbonization in Asia through the "Asia Zero Emissions Community (AZEC)" initiative and cooperation in the hydrogen and ammonia sectors.

D Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges

There exists a foundation for affinity toward Japan in Australia cultivated over many years, as shown by the fact that approximately 415,000 people in Australia learn the Japanese language (the fourth largest group in the world), and that there are over 100 sister city

relations. A variety of initiatives are implemented in order to strengthen the foundation of Japan-Australia relations, including the promotion of mutual understanding through JENESYS, an exchange program to promote understanding of Japan that includes young people, and the "New Colombo Plan" as well as the Young Political Leaders Exchange. Both Japan and Australia will continue to work on the appropriate and steady operation of the Japan-Australia Working Holiday Program.

E Cooperation in the International Community

In order to make an active contribution to peace and stability in the international community, the two countries have been strengthening cooperation in wide-ranging areas. In particular, cooperation has been deepened in addressing various issues facing the Indo-Pacific region, such as maritime security and nuclear and missile development by North Korea. Australia deployed the Royal Australian Navy frigate HMAS *Anzac* in late May and the frigate HMAS *Toowoomba* from late October to mid-November to undertake surveillance operations in the adjacent ocean areas around Japan. By doing so, for the ninth and 10th times since 2018, Australia has engaged in surveillance operations against illicit maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers with North Korean flagged vessels, which are prohibited by UN Security Council resolutions. Furthermore, from early February to early March and from late August to mid-September, Australia engaged in surveillance operations for the 11th and 12th times since 2018 by aircraft, using Kadena Air Base.

(2) New Zealand

A Brief Summary

Japan and New Zealand share fundamental values, such as democracy and a market economy. The two countries have been maintaining good relations over the years. In recent years, under the "Strategic Cooperative Partnership," the two countries have been strengthening bilateral cooperation in areas including the economy, security, defense cooperation and people-to-people exchanges, as well as cooperative relations

³⁰ Document signed at the October 2022 Japan-Australia Leaders' Meeting outlining the direction of Japan-Australia security and defense cooperation for the next 10 years.

on issues facing the region and the international community. On November 24, following the results of the general election that was held on October 14, a three-party coalition government was formed between New Zealand's National Party (1st party), ACT New Zealand and New Zealand First.

B High-Level Consultations

Amidst the complicated regional situation, Japan has been closely exchanging views at the leaders' and foreign ministers' levels with New Zealand, which is located in the Asia-Pacific region and shares fundamental values with Japan. In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Nanaia Mahuta and released the "Joint Declaration between the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand on Cooperation in the Pacific Islands Region." Under the Joint Declaration, the two ministers concurred to further promote cooperation toward the shared goals of the resilience and unity of the Pacific Island countries, in line with the priorities of the region, such as maritime security, climate change, infrastructure, and supporting "The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent" (refer to (3) A below) of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). Furthermore, in July, at the Japan-New Zealand Summit Meeting, two leaders concurred on the importance of maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law, confirmed that Japan and New Zealand will work together toward realization of FOIP, and concurred on the importance of coordination among like-minded countries in the Pacific Island countries. In December, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a telephone call with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Winston Peters, during which the two ministers confirmed that they will closely work together for stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region, including for Pacific Island countries, and concurred to cooperate toward the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10) to be held in 2024.

C Economic Relations

The two countries enjoy complementary economic relations and have closely cooperated on the steady implementation of the CPTPP and RCEP Agreement; on the promotion of free trade structures including WTO reforms, and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF); and on building a free and fair economic order based on the rule of law. In February at the Japan-New Zealand Foreign Ministers' Meeting, the two ministers welcomed that concrete bilateral cooperation is making progress in fields such as hydrogen and ammonia.

D Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges

People-to-people exchanges between Japan and New Zealand, such as for youths, take place through exchange programs like JENESYS, and a cumulative total of more than 1,100 people had participated by 2023. By 2023, more than 3,400 people have also participated in the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program, which invites foreign youth (on average approximately 100 people annually), and active exchanges are continuing. Additionally, exchanges between the 44 sister cities with the aim of promoting mutual understanding among youth are making progress.

E Cooperation in the International Community

The two countries are cooperating closely for the peace and stability of the international community in the international arena, including the UN. The two countries are playing a proactive role in regional stability and development, for example by cooperating in regional cooperation frameworks such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM), and by strengthening cooperation in the Pacific Islands region.

(3) Pacific Island Countries³¹

A Brief Summary and Overview

The Pacific Island countries and Japan are bound by the Pacific Ocean, have deep historical ties, and are important partners in such areas of cooperation in

³¹ Pacific Island countries: Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue, Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea

the international arena and the supply of fisheries and mineral resources. They are becoming increasingly important as a cornerstone of FOIP, as they are located at the heart of the Pacific Ocean and are also positioned as a key region in the New Plan for FOIP that was released in March. As one of Japan's important policies in diplomacy with Pacific Island countries, Japan has been hosting the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) once every three years since 1997. In July 2021, at the Ninth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM9) that was held via video conference, the Pacific Bond (KIZUNA) Policy was announced to further strengthen cooperation between Japan and the Pacific Island countries, and Japan is working to further strengthen relations with the Pacific Island countries, centered on the five priority areas of (a) COVID-19 Response and Recovery, (b) Sustainable Oceans based on the Rule of Law, (c) Climate Change and Disaster Resilience, (d) Strengthening the Foundation for Sustainable and Resilient Economic Development, and (e) People-to-People Exchanges and Human Resource Development. In the lead up to PALM10, which is scheduled to be held in 2024, Japan will continue making further efforts to resolve issues facing Pacific Island countries.

Furthermore, Japan is promoting cooperation with the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), a regional cooperation framework composed of the Pacific Island countries and regions. At its Leaders Meeting in 2022, the PIF announced the “The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent,” which outlines the ideal political, economic, and other conditions and strategic measures for Pacific Island countries and regions in 2050. Japan has expressed strong support for the Strategy. Japan will continue to support regional unity, respect the agendas (action plans) of the Pacific Island countries themselves, and continue to cooperate in a way that utilizes Japan's strengths.

B Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP)

PBP was established as a cooperative framework between like-minded countries to support the prosperity, resilience, and security of the Pacific region, and a June 2022 meeting of senior officials from like-minded countries (Japan, the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, and the UK) concurred to launch the PBP, with the

first PBP Ministerial Meeting then being held in New York, the U.S. in September 2022. The second PBP Ministerial Meeting was held in September 2023, with Canada, Germany, and the ROK joining as like-minded countries, and it was confirmed that the PBP will continue to advance dialogue with Pacific Island countries and promote concrete cooperation.

C Meetings with Dignitaries

2023 saw active visits by dignitaries between Japan and Pacific Island countries, marking a milestone in diplomacy with the Pacific Island countries.

In January, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TAKEI Shunsuke visited Vanuatu and paid courtesy calls to President Nikenike Vurobaravu and Prime Minister Alatoi Ishmael Kalsakau. The Embassy of Japan in Kiribati was opened in January, enhancing the system for maintaining and strengthening the good bilateral relationship and for more effectively gathering a variety of information and providing various types of support in emergency situations.

In February, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mark Stephen Brown of the Cook Islands; Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Kitlang Kabua of the Marshall Islands; and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Henry Puna visited Japan. Prime Minister Kishida met with the delegation, touching on the long-standing cooperative relationship between Japan and the PIF, stated that he hopes to further deepen the *kizuna* (bonds) with Pacific Island countries and regions under the FOIP vision, and the leaders also shared the view on the importance of intensive dialogue regarding the ALPS-treated water. Foreign Minister Hayashi met with the delegation, and a Japan-Cook Islands Summit Meeting and Japan-Marshall Islands Foreign Ministers' Meeting were also held. Also in February, Prime Minister Kishida held a Summit Meeting and working dinner with the Federated States of Micronesia President David W. Panuelo, who was visiting Japan as a guest on an official visit. During the meeting, President Panuelo stated that regarding the ALPS-treated water the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) now has deep trust in Japan's intentions and Japan's technological capabilities in not harming our shared oceanic assets and resources. Following the summit meeting, a signing ceremony of the Exchange of Notes on the provision

of medical equipment (under the Grant Assistance for Economic and Social Development Program) was held in the presence of the two leaders, and the two leaders issued a Joint Statement between Japan and FSM.

In March, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Solomon Islands and the Cook Islands, where he paid courtesy calls to Prime Minister Manasseh Damukana Sogavare of Solomon Islands and to Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Brown of the Cook Islands. Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade Jeremiah Manele of Solomon Islands, and at each meeting, the two foreign ministers respectively concurred to further strengthen bilateral relations between their two countries and cooperation with the Pacific Islands region, and Foreign Minister Hayashi once again explained Japan's position on the ALPS-treated water.

In April, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Takei visited Vanuatu and Fiji. In Vanuatu, he paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister Alatoi Ishmael Kalsakau and to Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade Napat; and in Fiji he paid a courtesy call to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for External Trade, Cooperatives, and SMEs Kamikamica, and held a meeting with Secretary General Puna of the PIF Secretariat. In May, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Takei also visited Fiji and Tuvalu. In Fiji, he inspected patrol boats that had been provided through Japan's grant aid, and in Tuvalu, he paid courtesy calls to Prime Minister Natano and to Minister of Justice, Communication and Foreign Affairs Simon Kofe, and also inspected the northern tip of Funafuti Island, which is known as a place symbolizing the impacts of climate change. Also in May, Prime Minister Kishida met with Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Brown of the Cook Islands, who was visiting Japan to attend the Outreach Meeting of the G7 Hiroshima Summit. The two leaders confirmed that both countries would cooperate closely for the PALM10 in 2024, given that the Cook Islands is the PIF chair country.

In June, Prime Minister Kishida held a Summit Meeting with President Surangel S. Whipps of Palau, meeting with him for the first time since September 2022, and the two leaders discussed further strengthening bilateral relations. President Whipps, touching on his visit to the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power



Foreign Minister Hayashi attends a dinner hosted by Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Brown of the Cook Islands (March 20, Rarotonga, Cook Islands)

Plant on the previous day, stated that Palau believes in science regarding the ALPS-treated water, and that this visit strengthened confidence in the efforts Japan has made to ensure people's health and safety under the leadership of Prime Minister Kishida. Also in June, there was a signing and exchange of notes for the "Economic and Social Development Plan" grant aid for Kiribati and Nauru in the "East Micronesia Cable Project" (a collaborative project between Japan, the U.S., and Australia to strengthen the communication infrastructure of the three island nations).

In July, Ambassador on Special Mission FURUYA Keiji (Member of the House of Representatives) visited the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and attended the inauguration ceremony of President Wesley W. Simina. Prior to the ceremony, Ambassador Furuya paid a courtesy call to the President and stated Japan's intention to further strengthen Japan-FSM relations and to continue cooperating for the social and economic development of FSM by leveraging Japan's advantages.

In September, Prime Minister Kishida, who was visiting Indonesia to attend the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings and prior to the East Asia Summit (EAS), held an informal talk with Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Brown of the Cook Islands, which was the third meeting that year. Prime Minister Brown stated that he supports Japan's efforts on ALPS-treated water.

In October, State Minister for Foreign Affairs HORII Iwao visited Papua New Guinea to attend the opening ceremony of the Nadzab Tomodachi International Airport, which was built with assistance from Japan, and also paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister James



State Minister for Foreign Affairs Horii attends the Dialogue Partners Meeting of the PIF as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan (November 10, Rarotonga, Cook Islands)

Marape of Papua New Guinea. During the courtesy call, the Prime Minister Marape stated that he supports Japan's efforts to ensure the safety of the discharge of the ALPS-treated water.

In November, the first Dialogue Partners Meeting of the PIF in about four years was held on Rarotonga in the Cook Islands. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Horii (Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan) attended and participated as a panelist in a thematic dialogue on Oceans and Environment, Climate Change and Disasters. He focused on climate change, which Pacific Island countries position as the greatest threat among Japan's strong commitments to the Pacific Islands region, and also gave a courteous explanation on the safety of discharging ALPS-treated water into the sea. He also took the opportunity of the Dialogue to meet with Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Brown of the Cook Islands, Premier Dalton Tagelagi of Niue, Prime Minister Hu'akavameiliku of Tonga, and Prime Minister Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa of Samoa.

In December, Prime Minister Kishida met with President Kabua of the Marshall Islands, who was visiting Japan, and Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs Lorin S. Robert of the Federated States of Micronesia.

In January 2024, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Minister of State Gustav Aitaro of Palau.

In February 2024, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Samoa and Fiji. Her visit to Samoa was the first visit by a Japanese Foreign Minister, and there she met with Head of State Tuimaleali'ifano Va'aletoa Sualauvi II; Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Foreign Affairs Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa; and Minister of Women, Community and Social Development Mulipola Anarosa Ale Molio'o. There was also a signing and exchange of notes for grant assistance for the Improvement of Facilities at the Faculty of Health Science, National University of Samoa, and Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited the Pacific Climate Change Center (PCCC). During the meeting with Prime Minister Fiamē, the strength of the trust between the two countries was confirmed, supported by a history of people-to-people exchanges even amidst the drastically changing circumstances surrounding the region. In Fiji, Foreign Minister Kamikawa attended the 5th Ministerial Interim Meeting of the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) as co-chair and conducted follow-up discussions on PALM9 and discussions toward PALM10, which is scheduled to be held in July 2024. She also took the opportunity of her visit to hold individual meetings with 10 Pacific Island countries and to discuss regional situations in addition to bilateral relations.

Through these and other meetings, Japan has reiterated that it will provide strong support to the Pacific Island countries, has exchanged views on international and regional situations, and has confirmed that it will continue to closely work together with the Pacific Island countries.

D Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges

At PALM9, "People-to-People Exchanges and Human Resource Development" were positioned as one of the five priority areas, and Japan announced that over the next three years it would actively engage in human exchanges and human resource development for more than 5,500 people at various levels and in various fields. As part of those efforts, Japan has been implementing people-to-people exchanges among university students through JENESYS. Furthermore, from FY2016 Japan commenced the Pacific Leaders' Educational Assistance for Development of State (Pacific-LEADS) for young government administrators of Pacific Island countries.

Currently, through a program called the SDGs Global Leader Course, Japan is accepting young government officials and private human resources from Pacific Island countries to universities and graduate schools in Japan.

In preparation for PALM10 in July 2024, Japan will continue working to further revitalize cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

7 Regional and Inter-Regional Cooperation

In the Indo-Pacific region, the world's growth center, it is important to ensure peace and prosperity for the entire region, and by extension for the world, by realizing a free and open order based on the rule of law. From this perspective, Japan strategically advances initiatives toward realizing a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" through various regional cooperative frameworks, including cooperation with like-minded countries such as Australia, India, ASEAN countries, and Europe, Japan-ASEAN, Japan-Mekong cooperation, ASEAN Plus Three (Japan, China and the Republic of Korea (ROK)), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), while maintaining the Japan-U.S. Alliance as the cornerstone of its foreign policy. In particular, the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP),"³² adopted by ASEAN in 2019, shares fundamental principles with FOIP, such as openness, transparency, inclusivity, and respect for international law. While respecting the ASEAN centrality and unity, Japan will further expand the support of the international community for AOIP, and intends to implement concrete Japan-ASEAN cooperation conducive to the principles of AOIP, and, as an "Indo-Pacific State," contribute to the stability and prosperity of the entire Indo-Pacific region.

(1) The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

Located in the geopolitically important heart of the Indo-Pacific, ASEAN is key to the realization of FOIP. At the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings held in November 2015, ASEAN declared to establish three communities; "ASEAN Political-Security Community," the "ASEAN Economic Community" and the "ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community" within 2015 (2015 Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Establishment of the ASEAN Community). Moreover, "ASEAN2025: Forging Ahead Together" was adopted as a guiding policy for the ASEAN Community for the 10 years from 2016 to 2025. In June 2019, the AOIP was adopted.

In East Asia where ASEAN plays an important role as a center of regional cooperation, multi-layered regional cooperation, such as ASEAN Plus Three (Japan, China and the ROK), EAS and ARF, is operating with ASEAN at its center, and cooperative relationships in a wide range of areas including politics, security and the economy have been established.

On the economic front, ASEAN has established the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) as well as other EPAs and FTAs with various countries including Japan, China, the ROK and India, thereby expanding the ASEAN centered free trade zone. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement, which consists of ASEAN countries, Japan, Australia, China, the ROK, and New Zealand, entered into force on January 1, 2022. While working closely with participating countries to ensure the transparent implementation of the RCEP Agreement, Japan will continue to play a leading role for the future participation of India in the Agreement, as India declined signing.

(2) Issue of the South China Sea

In the South China Sea, there are issues over sovereignty, and China has been continuing and intensifying its unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force and actions to increase regional tensions against the rule of law and openness, such as further militarization

³² AOIP is a guideline for ASEAN's engagement in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, and was adopted at the ASEAN Summit Meeting in June 2019. In addition to strengthening ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific region, AOIP sets out to promote cooperation in areas such as maritime cooperation, connectivity, SDGs, and the economy based on the principles of openness, transparency, inclusiveness, rules-based frameworks, good governance, respect for sovereignty, non-interference, complementarity with existing cooperation frameworks, equality, mutual respect, mutual trust, mutual benefit, and respect for international laws including the UN Charter, the UNCLOS, and other relevant UN conventions.

of disputed features (See Chapter 3, Section 1, 3 (4) d) and coercive actions against coastal countries and other countries. China also has not changed its position of not accepting the Arbitral Tribunal's award³³ to the Philippines and China, and has continued to assert maritime claims that are inconsistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). In 2023, following collisions between the Philippine and Chinese vessels, the Government of the Philippines issued multiple statements condemning the actions of Chinese vessels against Philippine vessels in the South China Sea.

The issue concerning the South China Sea is directly related to the peace and stability of the region and is a legitimate concern of the international community. It is also an important matter of interest for Japan, as Japan relies on sea transport for most of its resources and energy and also is a stakeholder that makes use of the South China Sea.

The international community, including Japan, has expressed serious concerns about China's unilateral attempts to change the status quo and its actions that further increase regional tensions including repeated dangerous actions in the area. Japan strongly opposes unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force and any actions that increase tensions. From the standpoint that the three principles of the rule of law at sea should be consistently adhered to (See Chapter 3, Section 1, 6 (2)), Japan has also consistently emphasized the importance of all the concerned parties related to the South China Sea to work toward peaceful settlement of disputes based on international law, in particular UNCLOS. Additionally, Japan has pointed out that China's assertions regarding baselines in the South China Sea are not based on relevant provisions of UNCLOS and that it is important to protect the freedom of navigation and overflight, including in the sea and airspace surrounding and above maritime features found to be low-tide elevations that do not have territorial sea and territorial airspace of their own according to the award of the Arbitral Tribunal. Japan has also pointed out that the basis of the "historical rights"

asserted by China is not clear under international law, and the Arbitral Tribunal ruled that the "historical rights" based on the "nine-dash line" claimed by China were found to be contrary to UNCLOS and were clearly denied. Foreign Minister Hayashi issued a statement reiterating Japan's position on the importance of the rule of law and on the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law in July 2022 and July 2023, in addition to the statement issued in July 2021, which marked five years since the Arbitral Tribunal's award as to the disputes between the Philippines and China. Coordination among Japan, the U.S., and the Philippines is also being strengthened. In September, Prime Minister Kishida held informal talks with President Marcos and Vice President Harris in Jakarta to discuss the situation surrounding the South China Sea. Japan-U.S.-Philippines Foreign Ministers' Meetings were held in July and September, and, based on the recent severe strategic environment including the situation in the South China Sea, the three ministers concurred to further strengthen coordination among the three countries and promote the materialization of the trilateral cooperation.

In 2018, negotiations on the Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea commenced between China and ASEAN. At the ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July, the second reading of the draft COC and the adoption of "Guidelines" to accelerate the early conclusion of the COC were announced, drawing expectation of some progress in the negotiations. Japan has stated its position that the COC should be effective, substantive, consistent with UNCLOS, and respect the legitimate rights and interests of all stakeholders that make use of the South China Sea.

(3) Japan-ASEAN Relations

Realizing a more stable and prosperous ASEAN, the key to the realization of FOIP, is absolutely essential to the stability and prosperity of the region as a whole. Japan is actively supporting ASEAN's efforts in accordance with "ASEAN Community Vision 2025" for further integration even after the establishment of

³³ In January 2013, the Government of the Philippines instituted arbitral proceedings under UNCLOS as to the disputes between the Philippines and China regarding the South China Sea. The Arbitral Tribunal organized by these proceedings rendered the final award on July 12, 2016. Japan issued a statement by the Foreign Minister on the same day, stating, "As the Tribunal's award is final and legally binding on the parties to the dispute under the provisions of UNCLOS, the parties to this case are required to comply with the award. Japan strongly hopes that the parties' compliance with the award will eventually lead to the peaceful settlement of disputes in the South China Sea."

the ASEAN Community, while steadily implementing the “Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation” adopted at the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit to commemorate the 40th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation in 2013. Furthermore, based on the “Joint Statement of the 23rd ASEAN-Japan Summit on Cooperation on ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific,” adopted in 2020, Japan has been building up concrete cooperation in line with AOIP’s priority areas of maritime cooperation, connectivity, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and economic and other possible areas of cooperation. The Statement was the first joint statement on AOIP adopted by ASEAN with external partners, and has been followed by similar joint statements between ASEAN and other dialogue partners. In March 2023, marking the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, Prime Minister Kishida announced a new plan for FOIP, clearly positioning Southeast Asia as an important region, and announced a new contribution of 100 million U.S. dollars to the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) and a revamp of the Japan-ASEAN Connectivity Initiative.

Japan’s consistent support for ASEAN centrality and unity was reaffirmed in July at the ASEAN-Japan Foreign Ministers’ Meeting by Foreign Minister Hayashi and in September at the ASEAN-Japan Summit by Prime Minister Kishida. In particular, at the ASEAN-Indo-Pacific Forum (AIPF) that was held as a side event to the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings in Jakarta in September, the Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative was newly announced to further strengthen connectivity through both hard and soft cooperation. Furthermore, at the ASEAN-Japan Summit in September, a Joint Statement was adopted to establish the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP).

ASEAN countries expressed their appreciation for Japan’s longstanding cooperation in a wide range of areas, its support for ASEAN centrality and the AOIP and its contribution of 100 million U.S. dollars to the JAIF. In addition, they welcomed the establishment of the CSP and the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative and also expressed their appreciation to the Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC) initiative. ASEAN countries also mentioned synergy

effects between FOIP and AOIP. Many ASEAN leaders also expressed their hope that the Commemorative Summit in December 2023 would set out a new vision for the relationship and further strengthen it.

Prime Minister Kishida also addressed the regional and international situation, noting that, in order for the region to remain as a center of growth, it is essential that peace and stability be maintained in the regional and international community. He also addressed and clearly stated Japan’s position including on Myanmar, Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, the East China Sea and the South China Sea, the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, economic coercion, North Korea, and ALPS treated water.

In response, ASEAN countries emphasized the importance of freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea, the importance of international order based on the rule of law, and the importance of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and resolution of the abductions issue.

In December, the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation was held in Tokyo; after recapping the past half century of ASEAN-Japan relations, the Joint Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, which set out a new vision for cooperation, and its Implementation Plan were adopted. The Joint Vision Statement, subtitled “Trusted Partners,” indicates that the trust built over a half century is the foundation of ASEAN-Japan relations. It also set forth the vision of the world that ASEAN and Japan aspire to, in which all nations can pursue peace and prosperity, and the principles of democracy, the rule of law, good governance, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are upheld. Prime Minister Kishida indicated that ASEAN and Japan would, first, pass on and strengthen their longstanding relationship of trust to the next generation as “Heart-to-Heart Partners across Generations;” second, find solutions to common challenges as “Partners for Co-creation of Economy and Society of the Future;” and third, promote a Free and Open Indo-Pacific as “Partners for Peace and Stability.” Furthermore, Japan announced the following concrete actions for these pillars. First, it will launch the “Partnership to Co-create a Future with the Next Generation: WA Project 2.0,”



Prime Minister Kishida attending a joint press conference with Indonesian President Joko, who served as co-chair at the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation (December 17; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

a comprehensive people-to-people exchange program including intellectual/cultural exchanges and NIHONGO (Japanese language) Partners, and will further promote two-way exchanges with young business leaders and others. Second it will further encourage private sector investment by utilizing new ODA initiatives, such as Co-creation for Common Agenda Initiative, with an emphasis on strengthening connectivity, combating climate change including AZEC initiative, and supporting small, medium, and micro enterprises and startups, while working on cooperation between the public and private sectors, and launch the “ASEAN-Japan Co-Creation Initiative for the Next-Generation Automotive Industry.” Third it will promote the development of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation based on the “Hiroshima Action Plan”; cooperation on law and justice; Women, Peace and Security (WPS); cybersecurity; and defense cooperation exchanges; and Official Security Assistance (OSA).

In response, ASEAN countries expressed their great appreciation for the achievements of the long-standing ASEAN-Japan cooperation in a wide range of fields. They also expressed high expectations for Japan’s new initiatives. At the Commemorative Summit, regional and international situations were also addressed in discussions about the three pillars mentioned above, and Prime Minister Kishida reiterated Japan’s position, stating that it is essential to uphold and reinforce the free and open international order based on the rule of law (See the Special Feature on page 96).

(4) Mekong-Japan Summit Meeting (Participating Countries: Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam and Japan)

The Mekong region (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam) is the core of the Indo-Pacific and is Japan’s Strategic Partner with strong economic growth and potential. Peace and prosperity in the Mekong region are extremely important to Asia as a whole, including Japan, since it contributes to narrowing the development gap in the region and promoting regional integration within ASEAN. From this perspective, Japan has been holding the Mekong-Japan Summit Meeting every year since 2009. Although since 2021 the Mekong-Japan Summit Meetings were postponed due to circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the situation in Myanmar, Japan will continue to steadily implement Mekong-Japan cooperation and to maintain its steadfast commitment to the region. Japan will continue to contribute to the prosperity and development of the region as a reliable partner for Mekong region countries.

(5) ASEAN Plus Three (Participating Countries: 10 ASEAN countries and Japan, China and the ROK)

The ASEAN Plus Three was established in 1997, when the Asian financial crisis triggered the addition of three countries (China, Japan, and the ROK) to ASEAN. ASEAN Plus Three has developed with a focus on areas such as finance and food security. Today, it covers cooperation in 24 areas, including finance, agriculture and food, education, culture, tourism, health, energy and the environment. Further cooperation is progressing in each area under the “ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Work Plan (2023-2027).”

At the ASEAN Plus Three Foreign Ministers’ Meeting held in July, Foreign Minister Hayashi stated that Japan would continue to fully support the mainstreaming of the AOIP, and promote concrete cooperation in the four priority areas of the AOIP as follows: (a) Maritime cooperation: Training operators to support maritime navigation, and supporting the formulation of plans for measures against marine plastic waste, and supporting marine monitoring; (b) Connectivity: Planning renewal of the Japan-ASEAN

SPECIAL
FEATURE

The 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation

● The Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation

In 2023, Japan and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) celebrated the historic milestone of 50 years of friendship and cooperation. In December, ASEAN leaders were invited to Tokyo to hold the Commemorative Summit, where they adopted the Joint Vision Statement, which outline a new vision for cooperation, and the Implementation Plan for it (See Chapter 2, Section 2-7 (3)).



ASEAN-way group photo at the Commemorative Summit (December 17, Tokyo. Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

● The Development of ASEAN-Japan Relations

Japan initiated dialogue with ASEAN in 1973, ahead of the rest of the world. In the half century since then, ASEAN has expanded, integrated, and dramatically developed. Although ASEAN-Japan relations have had many twists and turns, Japan has supported ASEAN's own initiatives in various fields through development cooperation and has walked together with ASEAN on the path to development and integration. Japan has also been ASEAN's major trading partner and direct investor for many years. In recent years, Japan has made an average of approximately 2.8 trillion yen in direct investments per year in ASEAN countries. Furthermore, there are approximately 15,000 Japanese companies operating in ASEAN countries, where they produce products, provide services, and create jobs, thereby contributing to economic development while also playing a role in incorporating the vitality of the rapidly growing ASEAN into the Japanese economy.

The relationship between ASEAN and Japan goes beyond business. It is a relationship of mutual trust that is based on heart-to-heart contact. This relationship has been nurtured through cooperation and exchanges in a wide range of fields over the years since the "Fukuda Doctrine"¹ of 1977.

ASEAN and Japan have also reached out to each other in times of great hardship, such as the Asian financial crisis, the Sumatra Earthquake and Indian Ocean Tsunami, the Great East Japan Earthquake, and, more recently, the global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to this accumulated history of cooperation, for the fifth year in a row, a survey by a well-known ASEAN think tank has ranked Japan as ASEAN's most reliable partner amongst major countries.

● Challenges Facing ASEAN and Japan

The international community is currently at a turning point in history, with the free and open international order based on the rule of law facing serious challenges. The world is also being confronted by complex and interrelated challenges, including climate change, disparities, public health crises, digitalization, and AI governance.

In this context, ASEAN and Japan, which share fundamental principles such as a prohibition on the use of force, the rule of law, good governance, democracy, fundamental freedom and human rights, are being called upon to cooperate more closely than ever before.

ASEAN is the cornerstone to achieving a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" based on the rule of law, which Japan advocates. Japan has strongly and consistently supported ASEAN Centrality and unity, and will support the mainstreaming of the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP)."



Prime Minister Kishida, co-chair (December 17, Tokyo. Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

● The Future of ASEAN-Japan Relations

In 2023, a total of 13 ministerial-level meetings were held between ASEAN and Japan, demonstrating the breadth of their cooperation. Numerous commemorative events and exchange programs were also held by both the public and private sectors.

The Joint Vision Statement that was adopted at the Commemorative Summit to conclude this 50th year, states (1) that as “Heart-to-Heart Partners across Generations,” ASEAN and Japan will strengthen and pass on their long-standing relationship of trust to the next generation; (2) that as “Partners for Co-creation of Economy and Society of the Future,” ASEAN and Japan will find solutions to common challenges; and (3) that as “Partners for Peace and Stability,” ASEAN and Japan will promote FOIP. Going forward, Japan will continue to work with ASEAN as a “Trusted Partner” to “co-create” peace and stability in the region and the world and a sustainable and prosperous future.

¹ The three ASEAN diplomatic principles that Prime Minister FUKUDA Takeo announced during his visit to Manila in the Philippines are that (1) Japan will never be a military power, (2) Japan will establish a “Heart-to-Heart” relationship with ASEAN, and (3) Japan and ASEAN are equal partners.

Connectivity Initiative; (c) SDGs: Implementing support for ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR) and the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS), the early operation of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED), and measures to address climate change; and (d) Economy and finance: Contributing to discussions on Disaster Risk Financing (DRF), Asian Bond Markets Initiative (ABMI) and the impact of financial digitalization in the region. Foreign Minister Hayashi also clearly explained Japan’s position that ALPS treated water will be discharged into the sea in accordance with international standards and practices, taking into consideration the conclusion of the IAEA Comprehensive Report.

At the ASEAN Plus Three (Japan-China-ROK) Summit, Prime Minister Kishida stressed the importance of upholding and reinforcing the free and open international order based on the rule of law in order for the Indo-Pacific region to remain an “Epicentrum of Growth.” As examples of Japan’s positive contributions to ASEAN Plus Three, he introduced Japan’s efforts in regional financial cooperation, food security, and post-COVID-19 measures, noting Japan’s support for ASEAN centrality and unity and the importance that Japan places on cooperation in line with the AOIP.

Regarding regional and international issues, Prime Minister Kishida clearly stated Japan’s position on the situations in North Korea and Myanmar and called for the continued understanding and cooperation toward the immediate resolution of the abductions issue. He also explained that the discharge of ALPS

treated water into the sea has been conducted in full accordance with international standards and practices. Finally, Prime Minister Kishida expressed his determination to strengthen cooperation under ASEAN+3 so that ASEAN will take the lead in efforts to uphold and reinforce the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

(6) East Asia Summit (EAS) (Participating Countries: 10 ASEAN countries and Japan, China, the ROK, Australia, New Zealand, India, the U.S. and Russia)

EAS was launched in 2005 with the aim of implementing strategic dialogue and cooperation on political, security, and economic issues of common concern to the region. As the region’s premier Leaders-led forum, it is expected that EAS will contribute to maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

At the EAS Foreign Ministers’ Meeting held in July, Foreign Minister Hayashi emphasized the importance of the free and open international order based on the rule of law, stated that unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force should never be tolerated anywhere in the world, and stated Japan’s position on Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, the Taiwan Strait, the situation in North Korea including the abductions issue, the situation in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, and the situation in Myanmar. He also clearly explained Japan’s position on the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea.



Foreign Minister Hayashi attends the 13th EAS Foreign Ministers' Meeting (July 14, Jakarta, Indonesia)

At the 18th EAS held in September, Prime Minister Kishida expressed Japan's support for ASEAN centrality and unity as well as the mainstreaming of AOIP; and pointed out that it is even more important to realize an international community characterized by cooperation, not division and confrontation, through upholding and reinforcing the free and open international order based on the rule of law. He also stated that Japan opposes unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force anywhere in the world.

As for regional and international issues, Prime Minister Kishida pointed out that the global economy has facing increasingly serious challenges by Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and underlined the need for the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops and the importance of achieving a just and lasting peace in Ukraine. He also stressed that Japan absolutely cannot accept Russia's nuclear threats, let alone its use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances, and will promote realistic and practical efforts toward the realization of a world without nuclear weapons under the "Hiroshima Action Plan."

With regard to North Korea, he expressed serious concern over its intensified nuclear and missile activities and stated that it is essential for the international community to be united and to fully implement UN Security Council resolutions in order to achieve the complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement (CVID) of all of North Korea's weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges. He also called for continued understanding and cooperation toward the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

Prime Minister Kishida stated that he strongly opposes the continued and intensified activities in the East China Sea that infringe upon Japan's sovereignty. He also pointed out that militarization and coercive activities are continuing in the South China Sea, and that claims of maritime rights and activities in the sea should be conducted in accordance with the relevant provisions of UNCLOS. He pointed out the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, and stated that Japan would engage itself in mutual efforts to build a "constructive and stable relationship" between Japan and China, together with President Xi Jinping, and that Japan would continue to have close communication at all levels for this purpose.

As for Myanmar, Prime Minister Kishida expressed serious concern over the continued deterioration of the situation in Myanmar and the lack of political progress, including the release of detainees such as State Counsellor Aung Saung Suu Kyi, and stated that he would provide maximal support to ASEAN efforts to resolve the situation.

Finally, he explained that the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea is being conducted in accordance with international standards and practices, with full precautions being taken to ensure safety.

(7) Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Cooperation

Trilateral cooperation among Japan, China and the ROK continues to be vital from the perspective of promoting exchanges and mutual understanding among the three countries that enjoy geographical proximity and share deep historical ties. Furthermore, as the three countries play a major role in the world economy and serve as the force driving prosperity of the East Asian region, the trilateral cooperation has huge potential in efforts to tackle various issues in the international community.

On November 26, a Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in Busan, ROK for the first time in four years. At the meeting, the three ministers reaffirmed the importance of promoting a future-oriented and practical cooperation between Japan, China and the ROK for peace and prosperity of the region and beyond from a broad perspective. The three ministers also concurred on advancing efforts in various areas such as (a) people-to-people exchange, (b)



The Tenth Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting (November 26, Busan, ROK)

science and technology, (c) sustainable development, (d) public health, (e) economic cooperation and trade, and (f) peace and security as the future direction of concrete cooperation, and promoting concrete discussions among the three countries in preparation for the next Summit.

In terms of regional and global situations, the foreign ministers also discussed current international situations, including North Korea's launch on November 21, using ballistic missile technology for the purpose of a satellite launch, the Israel-Palestine situation, and Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Regarding North Korea in particular, Foreign Minister Kamikawa stated that we should firmly make efforts toward the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, including through the full implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions, and once again asked for continued understanding and cooperation from China and the ROK toward the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

(8) Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) (See Chapter 3, Section 3, 3 (3))

Consisting of 21 economies (countries and regions) in the Asia-Pacific region, APEC promotes regional economic integration and cooperation across the region among the member economies on a voluntary basis. As the Asia-Pacific region is positioned as the "world's growth center," strengthening economic cooperation and trust in economic aspects in this region is crucial in pursuing Japan's further economic development.

At the APEC Leaders' Meeting held in San Francisco, U.S. in November, the leaders adopted the

"Golden Gate Declaration," and the U.S. released a Chair's Statement on the situation in Ukraine and the Israel-Palestinian situation. Prime Minister Kishida, who attended the Summit, expressed his determination to contribute to sustainable growth in the Asia-Pacific region.

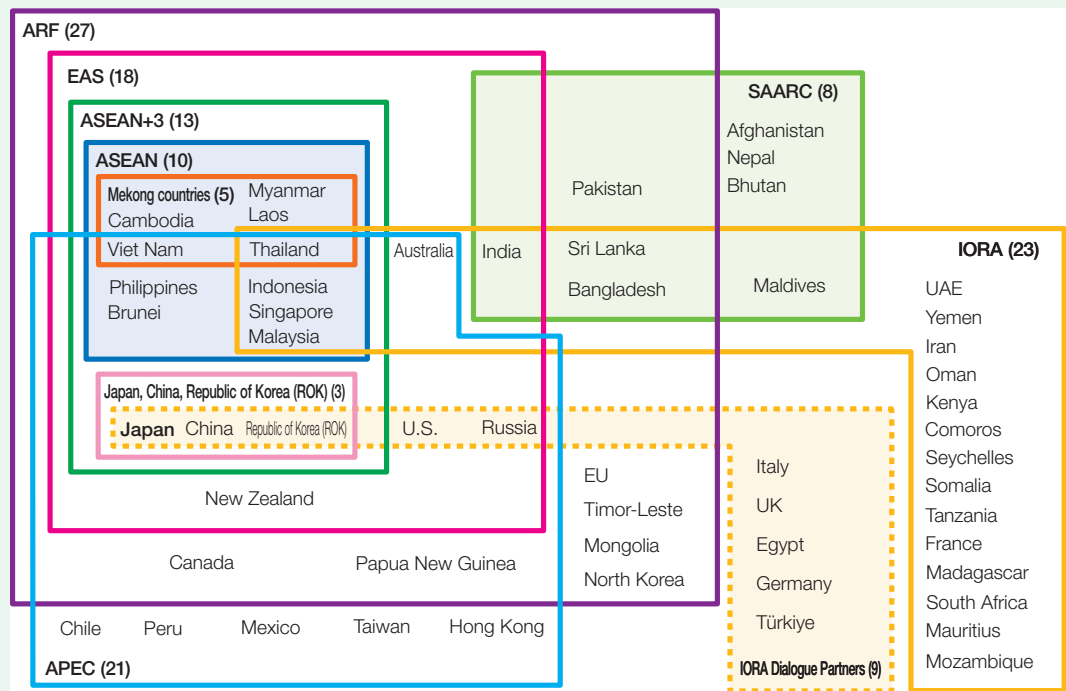
(9) South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

SAARC was officially inaugurated in 1985 with multiple objectives such as enhancing the welfare of citizens of the South Asian countries, and cooperation and collaboration in economic and social development and cultural areas. As of December 2023, SAARC has eight member states (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives and Afghanistan) and nine observer countries and institutions including Japan. As a relatively loose framework of regional cooperation, SAARC has worked primarily on economic, social and cultural areas, through summit meetings and meetings of the Council at the ministerial level (Foreign Ministers' meetings). However, no Summit Meeting has been held since 2014, and no Ministerial Meeting has been held since 2016. As part of the youth exchange between Japan and SAARC, Japan has invited 8,758 people as of the end of 2023.

(10) Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

IORA is a regional organization whose main purpose is to promote economic cooperation in the Indian Ocean rim region, and Japan has been participating as a dialogue partner country since 1999. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs KOMURA Masahiro attended the 23rd IORA Meeting of the Council of Ministers held in October and gave a speech stating that Japan will continue to cooperate with IORA as a partner country to realize FOIP.

Major Frameworks of the Asia-Pacific Region



The numbers within () indicate the number of participating countries, regions, or organizations

<Abbreviations>
ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)
EAS (East Asia Summit)
ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum)
APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation)
SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)
IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association)

3

North America

2

1 Overview

<The Importance of Cooperation with the North American Region, Which Shares Fundamental Values and Principles>

Currently, the international community is at a turning point in history. The international community is becoming increasingly divided and confrontational as seen in the escalation of tensions over Israel and Palestine and Russia's continued aggression against Ukraine. In addition, the security environment surrounding Japan is becoming increasingly severe, as evidenced by North Korea's launch of ballistic missiles, including intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM)-class, and continued and strengthened unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force in the East China Sea and South China Sea, which greatly increases the importance of solidarity with allies and like-minded countries, including the G7, that share fundamental values and principles. The United States (U.S.) is Japan's only ally. The strong Japan-U.S. Alliance is the linchpin of Japan's foreign and security policy, and the foundation of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. It is also essential to have cooperation with Canada, a member of the G7 and Japan's important partner in the Indo-Pacific region that shares universal values. Cooperation with these countries, based on the relationships of trust that Japan has built over the years, is essential to maintaining peace and stability in the region and the international community.

<The Diplomatic Strategies of the U.S. and Canada>

In 2022, the U.S. announced its Indo-Pacific Strategy and National Security Strategy, which outlines its commitment to tackling various challenges facing the international community in cooperation with allies and like-minded countries, including Japan. The U.S. is actively engaged in diplomatic activities based on these strategies. In February, President Joseph Biden

paid a surprise visit to Kyiv, Ukraine, and in October, he visited the Middle East, including Israel, in response to the terror attacks by Hamas and others. Meanwhile, the U.S. served as the chair of APEC in 2023, and in November it invited leaders and ministers from various countries to San Francisco for summit meetings, ministerial meetings, as well as a Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting, and a U.S.-China Summit Meeting. Moreover, 2023 was also a year in which the U.S. further strengthened its cooperation with like-minded countries, as symbolized by the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May and the Japan-U.S.- Republic of Korea (ROK) Summit held in August, when President Biden invited foreign leaders to Camp David for the first time.

2023 was a year in which Canada further accelerated its efforts to achieve the Indo-Pacific Strategy, announced in 2022. In April, Canada appointed Ambassador to Japan Ian McKay as its Special Envoy to the Indo-Pacific, and has been actively pursuing diplomacy with ASEAN and Pacific Island countries. Based on this Strategy, Canada also further strengthened its engagement in the region by increasing the presence of the Canadian Armed Forces even more in the region and, in terms of economic and people-to-people exchanges, promoting the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and strengthening cooperation with ASEAN. In October, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mélanie Joly gave a speech on foreign policy, stating that Canada's geographic location can no longer be relied upon to protect, and that it is important to address various threats, such as digital and informational threats. She also stated that Canada would place emphasis on (1) increasing investment in the military, (2) cooperation with the U.S., (3) cooperation with NATO and Europe, (4) Indo-Pacific policy, (5) Arctic policy, and (6) countering foreign interference in its domestic affairs. In particular, she emphasized that Canada should build as close ties with Japan and the ROK as its traditional

relationships with the UK, France, Germany, and Italy, and that it would invest in relations with ASEAN, demonstrating its continued emphasis on engagement in the Indo-Pacific region.

<Japan's Diplomatic Relations with North America>

Against this backdrop, 2023 was a year of further deepening relations between Japan and the U.S. and Canada. With the U.S. as Japan's only ally, the Japan-U.S. relationship is stronger and deeper than ever before, with multilayered cooperation in all areas, not just security and economy. Between January 2023 and the end of January 2024, Japan and the U.S. were in constant communication and cooperating at all levels, including holding four summit meetings and nine foreign ministers' meetings (including two telephone calls), in an effort to maintain peace and stability in the region and the international community. Cooperation between Japan and the U.S. is becoming broader and stronger, as seen in the issuance of the Japan-U.S. Joint Statement at the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting in January and the invitation from President Biden to Prime Minister Kishida during the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting held in San Francisco in November to pay an Official Visit with State Dinner in early 2024. Japan and the U.S. will continue to cooperate with each other, including within multilateral frameworks such as between Japan-U.S.-ROK, to strengthen Japan-U.S. security cooperation and uphold and bolster the economic order in the Indo-Pacific region.

In addition, between January 2023 and the end of January 2024, Japan and Canada held three summit meetings and five foreign ministers' meetings. Based on the "Japan-Canada Action Plan for Contributing to a Free and Open Indo-Pacific Region" announced in October 2022, progress has been made in numerous efforts toward realizing a FOIP, including responding to illegal ship-to-ship transfers¹ and conducting joint exercises. Japan and Canada also signed two memorandums of cooperation on the battery supply chain and industrial science and technology. Furthermore, Japan-Canada relations have been further strengthened through the visit by Canada Trade Mission ("Team

Canada") to Japan and the promotion of a wide range of diplomatic initiatives, including the CPTPP.

2 United States

(1) Situation in the U.S.

A Politics

In U.S. domestic politics in 2023, attention was focused on the moves of the Republican Party, which became the controlling party in the House of Representatives as a result of the midterm elections in November of the previous year, and how the Biden administration would manage policies in this divided situation in which a party other than the president's party is the majority party in Congress (House of Representatives). With the presidential election approaching in November 2024, attention was also focused on election-related developments, particularly between former President Donald Trump, who had already announced his candidacy in November of the previous year, and President Biden, who announced in April that he would seek a second term.

The 118th Congress was inaugurated on January 3, with the Democrats in control of the Senate and the Republicans in control of the House of Representatives. However, what Congress immediately faced when the session began was not standoff between the Democrats and Republicans, but a fierce confrontation that continues to this day between the mainstream faction, including the party leadership, and hardline conservatives within the House Republicans. With the inauguration of the 118th Congress, Representative Kevin McCarthy, who had served as House Minority Leader in the 117th Congress, was nominated by House Republicans for Speaker, but the conservative hard-liners in the party strongly opposed his selection. In negotiations with the opposition, Mr. McCarthy agreed to relax the procedural requirements for removal of the Speaker and to not raise the debt ceiling without spending cuts, and was eventually elected Speaker of the House after 15 rounds of voting. Speaker McCarthy then agreed with the Biden administration

¹ In this context, "ship-to-ship transfers" refers to the transfers to or from North Korea-flagged vessels of any goods or items at sea, which UN Security Council resolution 2375 (adopted in September 2017) prohibits the UN member states from facilitating or engaging in.

to raise the debt ceiling in June and to pass a stop-gap budget in September, but on October 3, hardline Republican conservatives strongly opposed these measures and he was removed from office with the support of Democrats who were discontent with the way he was running Congress. This was the first time in U.S. history that the Speaker of the House was removed from office, and it was precisely McCarthy's concessions to the conservative hard-liners in his party in exchange for his election as Speaker that made it possible. After his dismissal, House Republicans immediately began the process of selecting a new Speaker, and although three prominent Republican members of the House ran for the post one after another, none of them was elected due to severe internal party conflicts. Three weeks later, on October 24, the fourth candidate, Representative Mike Johnson, was finally elected Speaker. The selection of Johnson as the new Speaker of the House was premised on the agreement that had been reached between the former Speaker McCarthy and hardline conservative factions within the Republican Party when the former Speaker was selected. As a result, the new Speaker Johnson, like his predecessor, is vulnerable to pressure from hardline conservative forces within the party and will be expected to run Congress in a way that would reflect their wishes.

With the Republicans in control of the House of Representatives, the Biden administration would need to reach an agreement with the House Republican leadership in order to pass the budget necessary to maintain executive functions. In response, in February, in his State of the Union address, President Biden appealed for bipartisan cooperation and unity to realize policy on issues such as raising the debt ceiling, but at the same time, that appeal meant that President Biden would have to make concessions and compromises through negotiations with the House Republican leadership. In June, the Biden administration reached an agreement with House Republicans to raise the debt ceiling through January 1, 2025, subject to acceptance of House Republican demands, including an increase in federal safety net program eligibility requirements and partial cuts to the Internal Revenue Service budget. As for the stopgap budgets passed in September and November, as a result of compromise, spending was maintained at fiscal 2023 levels, which would actually

be negative when inflation is taken into account. The House Republican leadership worked with the Biden administration on these budget measures, but because of the high level of defections among their members, passage of the bills in the House required the approval of a larger number of Democrats than would otherwise have been the case. The hardline conservative wing of the House Republican Party also vehemently opposed this cooperation by the party leadership with the Biden administration and the Democrats. In October, the Biden administration sought to accommodate House Republicans' growing reluctance to support Ukraine by requesting a 106 billion U.S. dollar budget from Congress that would package support for Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan with enhanced spending on southern border measures, which the House Republicans prioritized. Negotiations then continued among a small number of bipartisan senators, focusing on the content of the border security measures, with the aim of passing a package bill.

In addition, the Supreme Court, which is one of the separate arms of government authority, has had a majority of justices considered conservative since 2020, but the Biden administration is countering the court's conservative decisions with administrative measures. In June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in succession that affirmative action in college admissions and partial forgiveness of college tuition loans were unconstitutional. These decisions are not only in direct conflict with the Biden administration's emphasis on diversity and strengthening the middle class, but also undermine the interests of young adults with college and higher degrees and younger generations, who constitute an important part of the Democratic Party's base of support. The Biden administration immediately issued a joint Department of Justice and Department of Education letter to the universities regarding the former, requesting that they continue to work to expand educational opportunities and ensure diversity. With regard to the latter, the Biden administration issued a federal Student Loan Debt Relief Plan in July, a Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE) plan in August, and an additional Student Loan Debt Relief Plan in October.

While challenging the conservative ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court, the Biden administration, the Democratic Party, and its supporters have made the

June 2022 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that the U.S. Constitution does not guarantee the right to abortion (*Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*) a political issue since that year's midterm elections and are actively using it to mobilize their support base for the election. In November, Democrats won the Ohio referendum to enshrine abortion rights in the state constitution (winning a majority), the Virginia House of Delegates elections (majority in both the House and Senate), and the Kentucky gubernatorial election (reelecting Governor Andy Beshear) by making the issue of abortion a key issue. These elections were positioned by both Democrats and Republicans as a prelude to the 2024 presidential and congressional elections, and it remains to be seen whether the abortion issue can continue to be a viable issue for President Biden and the Democratic Party to gain support.

For the 2024 presidential election, by the end of December 2023, the main candidates were President Biden from the Democratic Party; former President Trump, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley, Mr. Vivek Ramaswamy (a businessman), and former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie from the Republican Party; Mr. Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (son of former Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy) and Dr. Cornel West (a former Harvard University professor) running as independents; and Dr. Jill Stein from the Green Party. After announcing that he would seek re-election, President Biden called his economic policy, which centers on raising taxes on the wealthy, controlling drug prices, and investing in the environment, "Bidenomics," and in September he became the first president to visit a picket site where the United Auto Workers of America were on strike, in an attempt to demonstrate his focus on the middle class as president. Meanwhile, the Republican Party held presidential candidate debates in August, September, November, and December, but former President Trump did not participate in a single debate, holding rallies with supporters and delivering his own interviews during the same time.

Former President Trump has been indicted on four counts totaling 91 charges and is required to stand trial. In April, a New York state district court indicted

the former president over hush money payments to a woman with whom he allegedly had an extramarital affair. In June, a federal judge indicted him on charges related to the illegal hiding of classified documents at Trump's home. In August, separate indictments were filed in federal court and a Georgia district court relating to attempts to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election. These trials are expected to take place at the same time as the presidential primaries in 2024, and attention is focused on the impact the trials will have on former President Trump's approval rating, election campaign, and campaign finances.

In addition, cases against former President Trump are based on Section 3 of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits a federal or state official, who has made an oath to uphold the Constitution, from holding office if they join in an insurrection or rebellion against the state. The merits of the case and the factual findings regarding former President Trump's complicity in the insurrection are under dispute in more than 20 states.

B Economy

(A) Current Economic Situation

While the U.S. economy continued to be vulnerable to risks of a recession due to monetary tightening, a recession was averted thanks to strong consumer spending and other factors. Real GDP grew at 1.9% year-on-year compared to all of 2022, and continued to grow at a more positive rate in 2023, reaching 4.9% year-on-year from July to September, the highest growth rate since October 2021. Consumer spending, which accounts for 70% of GDP, led GDP growth at a rate of 4.0% year-on-year. Going forward, the impact of tighter monetary policy to date may pose a challenge to the slowdown in personal consumption due to lower labor demand.

As for inflation, which had been the focus of public attention, the consumer price index (CPI) slowed after reaching 9% year-on-year in September 2022 for the first time in about 40 years and has remained at the 3% level since June 2023. Regarding tighter monetary policy, which was initiated to normalize high inflation, the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) raised federal funds rates at its July meeting and has since kept its target rate range between 5.25% to 5.50%.

With employment, the unemployment rate remained steady in 2023 at the 3% level throughout the year, and the number of workers employed increased steadily. The rate of increase in average hourly earnings also trended downward in line with the decline in the inflation rate. Meanwhile, the labor participation rate (the ratio of the labor force (employed and unemployed) to the working-age population (population aged 16 and over)) stood at 62.5% (as of December 2023), and was on an improving trend, but is still in the process of recovery compared to 63.4% (as of February 2020) before the COVID-19 pandemic. The tight labor supply and demand is a factor that will lead to continued tighter monetary policy.

(B) Major economic policies

In June, the U.S. government summarized its economic policy since the start of the administration as “Bidenomics,” which consists of three key pillars: (1) Making smart public investments, (2) Empowering and educating workers, and (3) Promoting competition to lower costs and help small businesses thrive. The government also highlighted the creation of more than 13 million jobs, including about 800,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector, and more than 10 million applications for start-ups in the two years of 2021 and 2022 as achievements. In particular, the Biden administration recognized that targeted public investment in sectors aimed at ensuring long-term economic and security interests, such as infrastructure, semiconductors, clean energy, and climate security, will attract private investment. Based on this recognition, the administration pointed out that the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which was enacted in November 2021 as part of the American Jobs Plan and includes mandating the use of U.S.-made building materials, the CHIPS and Science Act, which was enacted in August 2022, and the Inflation Reduction Act, which was enacted as part of the American Families Plan and included tax deduction measures for the introduction of clean energy and the purchase of electric vehicles, have encouraged approximately 490 billion U.S. dollars in private investment, including future projections, and that manufacturing and construction spending has nearly doubled in two years, with 300,000 new jobs created in the clean energy sector in 2022 alone.

Prior to this announcement, in April, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Jake Sullivan, delivered a speech in which he expressed the idea of promoting a “new Washington consensus” consisting of a new industrial strategy in key strategic sectors, resilient supply chains among like-minded countries, promotion of innovative trade agreements focused on labor and environmental protection, transparent and inclusive development assistance, and de-risking (risk reduction) with China, to address the challenges posed by past economic policies, including oversimplified market efficiency, economic integration with non-market economies, the accelerating climate crisis, and economic inequality.

(2) Japan-U.S. Political Relations

Under the deep trust between the leaders and foreign ministers, the Japan-U.S. Alliance is stronger than ever, and the two countries are working closely together not only on security and the economy, but also on various issues facing the international community, including the situation in the Middle East and regional situations such as China, North Korea, and Ukraine.

On January 11, Foreign Minister Hayashi, who visited Washington, D.C. to attend the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (Japan-U.S. “2+2”), held a foreign ministers’ meeting with Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The two foreign ministers, building upon the discussions held at the Japan-U.S. “2+2” before this meeting, reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance as a whole by linking the reinforcement of Japan’s defense capabilities to making the capabilities of the U.S. more effective. The two ministers concurred to continue to work closely together in addressing issues related to China and for the success of the G7 Hiroshima Summit and the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting.

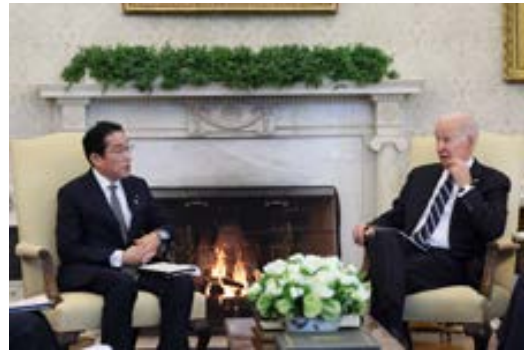
On January 13, Prime Minister Kishida, who was visiting Washington, D.C., held a Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting with President Biden.

The two leaders welcomed that the national security strategies of the two countries announced in 2022 are aligned with each other, as both countries face the most severe and complex security environment in recent years and renewed their determination to



Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting (January 11, Washington, D.C., U.S.)

further strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, including seeking to create synergies in implementation of the strategies of the two countries. The two leaders then instructed further deepening of concrete consultations regarding Japan-U.S. cooperation on the security front. The two leaders exchanged views on the regional issues, and concurred that Japan and the U.S. would continue to work closely together in dealing with various issues concerning China and that they would cooperate with China on shared challenges, while also reiterating the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and encouraging the peaceful resolution of the cross-Straits issue. Furthermore, they concurred on continuing to work closely together between Japan and the U.S. as well as among Japan, the U.S., and the ROK toward the complete denuclearization of North Korea. Prime Minister Kishida also asked for continued understanding and cooperation of the U.S. for the immediate resolution of the abductions issue. Regarding Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the two leaders concurred on continuing to strongly promote sanctions against Russia and support for Ukraine in close coordination with the G7 and other like-minded countries. They also reaffirmed their views that Russia's nuclear threat is absolutely unacceptable, and Russia should never use nuclear weapons under any circumstances. At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, Prime Minister Kishida explained that he would like to demonstrate the G7's vision and determination to uphold the international order based on the rule of law and also discuss the Indo-Pacific substantially. The two leaders then concurred on working together toward a world without nuclear weapons, and shared the view that it



Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting (January 13, Washington, D.C., U.S.; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

is important for the G7 to work in solidarity in such areas as the global economy, including energy and food security, economic security, and global issues such as climate change, health and development. The leaders reaffirmed their commitment that Japan and the U.S. will work closely together toward the success of the G7 Hiroshima Summit. The two leaders also exchanged views on the field of economy, and concurred that Japan and the U.S. will lead the international community toward sustainable and inclusive economic growth and maintaining and strengthening a rules-based, free and fair international economic order. The two leaders shared the view that U.S. engagement in the regional economic order is becoming increasingly important, and concurred on cooperating for the progress of Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) negotiations. Prime Minister Kishida conveyed Japan's position on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), from a strategic perspective. The two leaders also concurred on promoting "Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT)." The two leaders concurred on strengthening supply chain resilience among like-minded countries to handle economic security challenges, including economic coercion. They also confirmed their commitment to cooperate to promote and protect critical technologies, including semiconductors as well as biotechnology, quantum and AI technologies. Furthermore, the two leaders shared views on the importance of working toward strengthening energy security. The two leaders concurred on further promoting Japan-U.S. cooperation in the area of outer space. Furthermore, Prime Minister Kishida stated that he will strengthen efforts to realize FOIP, to which President Biden reiterated the unwavering U.S. commitment to the region. The two

Sharing Feelings Through Cherry Blossoms: Visit to the United States by Mrs. KISHIDA Yuko, the Spouse of Prime Minister Kishida

In April, Mrs. KISHIDA Yuko, the spouse of Prime Minister Kishida, visited the White House at the invitation of Dr. Jill Biden, the First Lady of the United States (U.S.). This was the first time that the spouse of the Prime Minister of Japan made a solo visit to the U.S. at the invitation of the First Lady of the U.S. It demonstrates the unprecedented close and firm ties between Japan and the U.S.

On this occasion that was the first of its kind, Mrs. Kishida's goal was to deepen her personal relationship of trust with First Lady Dr. Biden, thereby contributing to even closer Japan-U.S. relations. It is very important that the two spouses spend time together and build a personal relationship to further strengthen the relationship between the leaders of the two countries as well as to further strengthen Japan-U.S. relations.

When Mrs. Kishida arrived at the White House and was greeted by First Lady Dr. Biden, she immediately realized that First Lady Dr. Biden shared exactly the same sentiments as she did. One of the key phrases during Mrs. Kishida's visit was "cherry blossoms," as it was during the National Cherry Blossom Festival, *Sakura Matsuri*¹ – Japanese Street Festival,² which is held annually in Washington, D.C. during the flowering season of *Somei Yoshino* cherry trees, which were presented by Japan in 1912. For this reason, Mrs. Kishida chose to wear cherry blossom-colored attire, and First Lady Dr. Biden coordinated her clothing in the same color scheme. The sight of the two of them standing side by side symbolized the harmonious sentiments of Japan and the U.S.

Prior to the luncheon, Mrs. Kishida made matcha for First Lady Dr. Biden in a cherry blossom patterned tea bowl that she had brought from Japan. Appreciating the idea of "*Ichigo-Ichie*," which means to treasure each encounter, they shared the recognition that the current relationship between Japan and the U.S. is in a splendid state today.

The luncheon was held in a relaxed atmosphere around a table decorated with a cherry blossom cloth. Afterwards, First Lady Dr. Biden gave a tour of the White House, which was lit up in cherry blossom colors, while live music was performed, including Japanese songs such as "*Furusato*" (Hometown). On the way, they stopped by the Oval Office, where Mrs. Kishida met with President Biden. The Oval Office was filled with friendly smiles during the brief conversation with President Biden. To cap off the visit, Mrs. Kishida and First Lady Dr. Biden planted a cherry tree sapling in the White House garden. First Lady Dr. Biden said, "The planting of this tree is a symbol of the friendship between our two nations forever and ever." They confirmed the broad and deep relationship not only between the governments of Japan and the U.S., but also between the people of each country.

The visit to the White House began with a friendly handshake between Mrs. Kishida and First Lady Dr. Biden. They were considerate of each other during their time together and hugged before parting. Although the visit lasted only a few hours, they built a solid trusting relationship, and the occasion symbolized the further promotion of friendship and goodwill between Japan and the U.S.



Meeting with President Biden
(April 17, Washington, D.C., U.S.)



Mrs. Kishida and First Lady Dr. Biden planting a cherry tree
(April 17, Washington, D.C., U.S.)

¹ This is the largest event in Washington, D.C., held to commemorate the gift of about 3,000 cherry trees by Tokyo mayor OZAKI Yukio as a token of goodwill between Japan and the U.S. It attracts about 1.5 million visitors, and events related to Japanese and U.S. culture are held for about one month.

² The Japan-America Society of Washington DC holds this Japanese culture Street Festival with a long history as part of the National Cherry Blossom Festival. It marked its 61st anniversary in 2023. During her visit to the U.S., Mrs. Kishida observed the festival, which was bustling with many people.



Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting (April 17, Tokyo)

leaders concurred that Japan and the U.S. will continue to promote endeavors to realize FOIP. The two leaders reconfirmed unprecedented Japan-U.S. cooperation, rooted in the shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific and a peaceful and prosperous world, and guided by the shared values and principles including the rule of law, and issued the Joint Statement of the U.S. and Japan.

On March 3, Foreign Minister Hayashi, who was visiting New Delhi, India to attend the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Foreign Ministers' Meeting, met with Secretary of State Blinken and held a Japan-U.S. foreign ministers' meeting. The two ministers confirmed that Japan and the U.S. will remain united and continue to drive efforts toward the realization of FOIP by leveraging cooperation of the G7 and Japan, U.S., Australia, and India. The two ministers concurred that, as one year has passed since the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, they will continue to impose severe sanctions against Russia and provide strong support for Ukraine. They also exchanged views on issues related to China.

On April 17, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a foreign ministers' meeting with Secretary of State Blinken, who was visiting Japan to attend the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The two foreign ministers concurred to cooperate to further strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, and, building upon the discussions at the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, they held a frank exchange



Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting (May 18, Hiroshima Prefecture; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

of views on the situation in Ukraine, responses to issues relating to China, responses to North Korea including the abductions issue, and the importance of engagement and support for the so-called "Global South." The two foreign ministers also exchanged views on the IPEF and the TPP.

On May 18, Prime Minister Kishida held a summit meeting with President Biden, who visited Japan to attend the G7 Hiroshima Summit. The two leaders concurred that it is important for Japan and the U.S. to coordinate closely in the field of startup and innovation, including promoting the "Global Startup Campus" initiative in order to create an ecosystem of innovation and startup in the field of deep tech.² The two leaders also welcomed the finalization of a Memorandum of Cooperation on education and technology. President Biden reiterated the U.S. commitment to the defense of Japan under the Japan-U.S. Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, backed by the full range of capabilities, including nuclear, and, in this context, the two leaders reaffirmed their intent to ensure full bilateral coordination throughout every phase of a developing situation. The two leaders exchanged views on regional developments, including China, the ROK, North Korea, Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and the so-called Global South. They also exchanged views on the IPEF and the CPTPP, and shared the importance of promoting and protecting critical technologies. They welcomed a planned signing

² A technology based on scientific discoveries obtained through research in a specific field of natural sciences, which, if commercialized and implemented in society, has the potential to have an impact on society, such as by solving socio-economic issues that need to be resolved nationally or globally (technology such as AI and big data, bio-materials, robotics, electronics, sensors and IoT in the fields and sectors of agriculture and food, environment and energy, health, medicine, ocean and space. (Maru and Obara (2019)) (Created based on "White Paper on International Economy and Trade 2023" (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) <https://www.meti.go.jp/report/tsuhaku2023/2023honbun/i2250000.html>))

of partnerships between universities and companies in Japan and the U.S. in the area of quantum and semiconductors and concurred on expanding cooperation into the areas of biotechnology and AI. Furthermore, both leaders shared the importance of working together toward strengthening energy security, and concurred on further materializing economic security cooperation through the Japan-U.S. Economic Policy Consultative Committee (the Economic “2+2”).

The following day, on the 19th, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers’ Meeting with Secretary of State Blinken, who was also visiting Japan. The two ministers concurred to steadily implement cooperation to further strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, and also exchanged views on issues relating to China, as well as regional situations in North Korea, Russia, Ukraine, and elsewhere. They concurred to materialize economic security cooperation in the Economic “2+2,” and exchanged views on the IPEF and CPTPP.

On June 17, Foreign Minister Hayashi had a telephone call with Secretary of State Blinken, who was en route from Washington, D.C. to Beijing. Ahead of his own visit to China, Secretary of State Blinken explained the U.S. government’s intention regarding the visit, and the two ministers shared the view that Japan and the U.S. would continue to work closely together in addressing issues relating to China. The two ministers strongly condemned North Korea’s launch of multiple ballistic missiles that landed within Japan’s Exclusive Economic Zone. The two ministers shared the recognition that North Korea’s ballistic missile launches with an unprecedented frequency and in an unprecedented manner, constitute a grave and imminent threat to regional security and pose a clear and serious challenge to the international community. The two ministers also reaffirmed the importance of strengthening coordination between Japan and the U.S. as well as among Japan, the U.S., and the ROK.

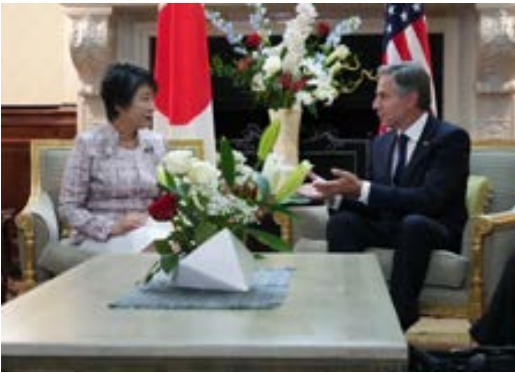
On August 18, Prime Minister Kishida visited Camp David, U.S., to attend the Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting and held a Japan-U.S. summit meeting with President Biden. Prime Minister Kishida expressed

his sympathies on the damage caused by the wildfires in Maui and stated Japan’s decision to provide relief measures for the victims of the disaster. He also stated that the Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting was meaningful, and in response, President Biden stated that he wished to deepen cooperation between Japan and the U.S. as well as among Japan, the U.S., and the ROK under the increasingly severe security environment. The two leaders exchanged views on regional situations, including Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and issues relating to China. Prime Minister Kishida expressed his appreciation for the U.S. support and understanding concerning Japan’s efforts on the ALPS treated water.³ The two leaders exchanged views on coordination to prevent the spread of disinformation regarding the ALPS treated water. Furthermore, recognizing the U.S. commitment to the defense of Japan backed by the full range of U.S. capabilities, the two leaders welcomed that the two countries will initiate the joint development of GPI (Glide Phase Interceptor) for further strengthening the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance.

Foreign Minister Kamikawa, who assumed her new post on September 13, held a telephone call with Secretary of State Blinken on September 14, the day after assuming her new post, as her first telephone call with the U.S. foreign minister. Foreign Minister Kamikawa expressed that she would like to build a good relationship with Secretary Blinken and to further strengthen the Japan-U.S. Alliance, which is stronger than ever. Secretary Blinken offered his congratulations to Foreign Minister Kamikawa for her assumption of office. The two ministers exchanged their views on regional issues and concurred on continuing to work closely together on Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, issues related to China, and North Korea’s nuclear and missile development and the abductions issue. The two ministers also confirmed that they would continue to cooperate on Japan-U.S. security and Japan-U.S. economic affairs.

On September 18, soon after the telephone call immediately following her inauguration as foreign minister, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, who was visiting

³ ALPS treated water is water which is processed by devices such as ALPS (Advanced Liquid Processing System) to ensure that the radioactive materials other than tritium surely meet the regulatory standards for safety. ALPS treated water is then sufficiently diluted so that the concentrations of the radioactive materials including tritium is far below the regulatory standards for safety, and then finally discharged into the sea.



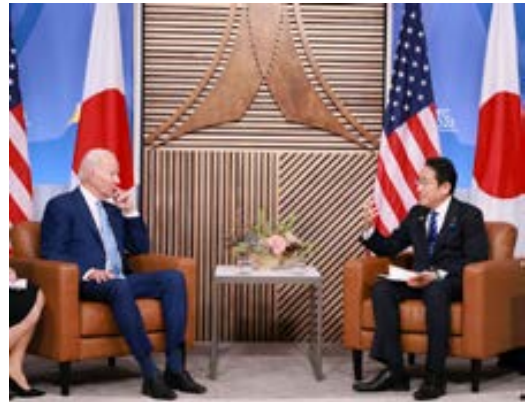
Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting (September 18, New York, U.S.)



Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting (November 7, Tokyo)

New York for the UN General Assembly, held a foreign ministers' meeting with Secretary of State Blinken. The two ministers exchanged views on the many issues facing the international community, including Russia's aggression against Ukraine and issues concerning North Korea and China. Also, Minister Kamikawa stated her appreciation for the U.S. support and understanding to Japan's efforts on the ALPS treated water. The two ministers concurred to continue the discussion for deepening Japan's concrete security cooperation to further strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, and to consult closely at various levels toward strengthening extended deterrence. Minister Kamikawa also stated that she would like to collaborate closely on the field of Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), and Secretary Blinken expressed his support.

On November 7, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a foreign ministers' meeting with Secretary of State Blinken, who was visiting Japan to attend the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Minister Kamikawa unequivocally condemned the terror attack on October 7th by Hamas and others. Minister Kamikawa also



Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting
(November 16, San Francisco, U.S.; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

stated her utmost support for the U.S. diplomatic efforts on the situation in Israel and Palestine and stated that the firm unity between Japan and the U.S. is important at a time when the international community faces a variety of challenges. The two ministers held a candid exchange of views on the situation in the Middle East. The two ministers concurred on continuing to work closely to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza and toward realizing humanitarian pauses that would contribute to such ends, as well as to realize a two-state solution. The two ministers further concurred on continuing diplomatic efforts to prevent the current situation from spreading to the Middle East region at large. The two ministers also concurred on continuing to work closely together on issues facing the international community, including Russia's aggression against Ukraine and various issues relating to China.

On November 16, Prime Minister Kishida, who was visiting San Francisco to attend the APEC Leaders' Meeting, held a summit meeting with President Biden. He welcomed the significant progress of the IPEF and stated that the holding of the Economic "2+2" was timely. The two leaders exchanged views on regional situations, including the situation in the Middle East and Russia's aggression against Ukraine. They concurred to continue close Japan-U.S. cooperation in addressing issues relating to China and confirmed the importance of cooperating with China on issues of common concern, taking into account the results of the U.S.-China Summit held the previous day. Furthermore, during the meeting, President Biden extended an invitation to Prime Minister Kishida to make an official visit in early 2024.

On January 12, 2024, during a visit to Washington, D.C., Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Secretary of State Blinken for a foreign ministers' meeting. Minister Kamikawa stated that holding a candid discussion at the beginning of the new year, looking ahead to this year and beyond, was meaningful. Minister Kamikawa expressed her appreciation for the cordial messages of sympathy from President Biden and Dr. Jill Biden as well as Secretary Blinken, following the Noto Peninsula Earthquake. The two ministers concurred on coordinating to further strengthen the Japan-U.S. Alliance, a global partnership, to uphold and strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law and to ensure the world where the human dignity of each person is respected. The two ministers also concurred on further strengthening the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. The two ministers exchanged views on regional situations, including the situation in the Indo-Pacific region, Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and the situation in the Middle East. In addition, Foreign Minister Kamikawa stated that she would like to collaborate closely with the U.S. regarding WPS, including in the UN Security Council, and Secretary Blinken expressed his support.

(3) Japan-U.S. Economic Relations

Japan-U.S. economic relations are one of the three pillars of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, together with national security and human interactions. For example, Japan has been the world's largest investor in the U.S. for four consecutive years in terms of outstanding direct investment in the U.S. (775.2 billion U.S. dollars in 2022), and helped to create approximately 960,000 jobs in 2021 (second place following the UK). In addition to such multifaceted efforts to strengthen Japan-U.S. bilateral relations through vigorous investment and employment creation, 2023 was a year that saw more active face-to-face diplomacy and deeper Japan-U.S. economic relations.

Japan and the U.S. are strengthening their cooperation in a wide range of fields together with regional partners with the aim of achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the Indo-Pacific region.

Regarding the IPEF (See Chapter 3, Section 3, 2(1) A(B)), which was launched in conjunction with

President Biden's visit to Japan in May 2022, a ministerial-level meeting was held in Detroit in May 2023, and the substantial conclusion of the IPEF Supply Chain Agreement (Pillar 2) was announced. Furthermore, in November that year, summit and ministerial-level meetings were held in San Francisco, where a signing ceremony for the IPEF Supply Chain Agreement was held, and the substantial conclusion of the IPEF Clean Economy Agreement (Pillar 3) and the IPEF Fair Economy Agreement (Pillar 4) was announced. Japan will continue to contribute constructively to IPEF discussions while working closely with regional partner countries in order to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the Indo-Pacific region.

At the Japan-U.S. Partnership on Trade, which was launched in November 2021, meetings were held in February and December 2023, discussing issues such as strengthening Japan-U.S. cooperation in the field of trade in the Indo-Pacific region and Japan-U.S. cooperation on the global agenda.

During the fifth through seventh expert-level working group meeting of the Japan-U.S. Global Digital Connectivity Partnership (GDGP) held in April, August, and December, government officials and private sectors exchanged views on Open RAN, 5G, and submarine cables, among other issues, and Japan and the U.S. seized various other opportunities to strengthen cooperation in the digital field. In particular, with regard to ICT infrastructure such as Open RAN and 5G, it was confirmed that Japan and the U.S. will identify priority countries to engage with a shared vision and will continue to hold discussions with the aim of expanding cooperation to promote inclusive Internet connectivity and build secure ICT infrastructure.

Facing the prospect of significant increase in demand for electric vehicle batteries, it was an urgent matter to secure critical minerals which are essential to the production of clean vehicles. In light of this situation, Japan aimed to build resilient supply chains through coordination between Japan and the U.S. and also among like-minded countries with strengthened cooperation for ensuring sustainable and equitable supply chains for such critical minerals. Following this, on March 28, the "Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the United States on Strengthening



Second Ministerial Meeting of the Japan-U.S. Economic Policy Consultative Committee (the Economic “2+2”)(November 14, San Francisco, U.S.)

Critical Minerals Supply Chains” (Japan-U.S. Critical Minerals Agreement (CMA)) was signed at the office of the U.S. Trade Representative in Washington, D.C., between Ambassador of Japan to the U.S. Tomita, and U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai. Based on the conclusion of this agreement and others, Japan has become a “country with which the United States has a free trade agreement in effect” under the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act, and relevant critical minerals extracted or processed in Japan now qualify for tax credits under the electric vehicle (EV) tax incentive program.

Taking into account the progress of these individual cooperation projects, the Second Ministerial Meeting of the Japan-U.S. Economic Policy Consultative Committee (the Economic “2+2”), which was launched in January 2022, was held in November, where Foreign Minister Kamikawa, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry NISHIMURA Yasutoshi, Secretary of State Blinken, and Secretary of Commerce Raimondo held strategic discussions on (1) strengthening the rules-based economic order in the Indo-Pacific region, and (2) strengthening economic resilience as well as promoting and protecting critical and emerging technologies, and issued a joint statement. The two sides concurred to continue discussions at the vice-ministerial level and to hold ministerial meetings on a regular basis in order to further expand and deepen Japan-U.S. cooperation in the economic field from a strategic point of view.

Furthermore, when Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Washington, D.C., in January 2024, she attended a

Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers’ Meeting and exchanged views with Secretary of Commerce Raimondo on future initiatives based on the outcomes of the Economic “2+2” meeting and the IPEF in November.

Along with the federal government, building closer ties with the unique individual states of the U.S. will help deepen Japan-U.S. economic ties at an even closer level. In 2023, the Japan-U.S. Business Conference, the Joint Meeting of the Midwest U.S.-Japan & the Japan-Midwest U.S. Association & Midwest U.S.-Japan Association, and the Joint Meeting of the Japan-U.S. Southeast & Southeast U.S./Japan Associations, and the Japan-U.S. Southeast Association meetings were held in person in Japan, and on these occasions, several U.S. governors led economic and trade missions to Japan. This was followed by individual occasions where the governors of Virginia and New Jersey, among others, visited Japan. The Government of Japan also signed the Memorandum of Cooperation on Economic and Trade Relations with the Government of Florida. Additionally, in April, a memorandum concerning reciprocal partial exemptions of the examination for driver licenses with the state of Colorado was signed.⁴

Moreover, in order to strengthen the foundation of Japan-U.S. economic relations from the grassroots level, the Government of Japan is also working as one on efforts to promote understanding of Japan. Since the launch of the Government Taskforce on Strengthening Japan-U.S. Ties at the Grass Roots Tour in 2017, the Government of Japan has undertaken efforts to build tailor-made relations in accordance with the characteristics of each region and the level of interest in Japan within the target regions. As an example, various initiatives have been implemented with the cooperation of various ministries and agencies, such as the “Grassroots Caravan” to disseminate the contributions of Japanese companies to regional economies, and projects related to supporting Japanese start-up companies in light of the “New Form of Capitalism” set forth by the Kishida Cabinet. Going forward, toward further progress in Japan-U.S. economic relations, the basic tenets of “Action Plan 2.0”, an approach in line with the Biden administration’s priority policies (emphasis on workers

⁴ In order to reduce the burden on local Japanese nationals in obtaining driver’s licenses, a memorandum concerning reciprocal partial exemptions of the examination for driver licenses with seven states have already signed: Maryland, Washington, Hawaii, Virginia, Ohio, and Indiana.

COLUMN

The Ties That Bind: Strengthening Japan-U.S. Relations through Japan-Hawaii Sister City and Friendship City Exchanges

Do you know how many sister city and friendship city relationships there are between Japan and Hawaii? There have been as many as 30 relationships of this kind, with long-lasting, active exchanges. Some exchanges were initiated based on hometown associations established in Hawaii by Japanese immigrants and their descendants, while others were initiated by a mutual desire for peace and security after the harsh experience of World War II or tragic maritime accidents. As these examples show, the sister city and friendship city relationships between Japan and Hawaii have a long and deep history of camaraderie that began with the arrival of Japanese immigrants in Hawaii over 150 years ago.

Although sister city and friendship city exchanges are indispensable parts of the Japan-Hawaii relationship, in-person exchanges were suspended for a while due to the spread of COVID-19. Later, once COVID-19 had subsided in Hawaii, representatives from 22 Japanese local governments with sister city and friendship city relationships with Hawaii gathered in Honolulu on July 27 and 28 for the first “Hawaii-Japan Sister State & Sister City Summit” with the aim of strengthening the bonds that have been established and developing new ties. A cumulative total of 400 people attended the Summit, including the governors of six prefectures and mayors and

their representatives of 16 cities and towns from Japan, as well as the Governor of Hawaii and the Mayors of Honolulu, Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii from the State of Hawaii. The local leaders of Japan and Hawaii met in-person for the first time in a long while. They discussed the possibility of expanding the sister city and friendship city exchanges that have been conducted on a one-on-one basis in the past, and exploring multilayered cooperation between relevant cities to make the exchanges more effective in the future. Additionally, panel discussions were held inviting leaders in the fields of sustainable energy, education, sustainable tourism, as well as business and economy, which are common issues to Japan and Hawaii.



Group photo of the Hawaii-Japan Sister State & Sister City Summit (July 27, Hawaii, U.S.; Photo: JASH)



Ainu dance of Hokkaido performed at the commemorative reception at the Consul General's official residence (July 27, Hawaii, U.S.)

The Consulate General of Japan in Honolulu cooperated with the host organization, the Japan-America Society of Hawaii (JASH), in preparing for the summit, and played a part in the coordination work between the Hawaii and Japanese local governments. In addition, on July 27, a commemorative reception was held at the official residence of the Consul General, inviting the Summit participants. The reception featured performances of Ainu dance from Hokkaido and *Shishimai* dance of Okinawa, providing an opportunity to showcase the charms of Japan's regions to people active in various fields in Hawaii. Furthermore, six local *kenjinkai* (associations of people from a particular prefecture) in Hawaii exhibited booths,

providing an opportunity to interact with representatives of local governments and contributing to the strengthening of the Japan-Hawaii relationship.

The “Hawaii-Japan Sister State & Sister City Summit” became one of the largest Japan-related events in Hawaii following COVID-19, symbolizing the resumption of exchanges between Japan and Hawaii going forward.

and the middle class, climate change and energy, innovation and science technology, etc.), will continue to be effective guidelines. At the same time, in line with “Action Plan 3.0,” which was formulated in 2023 by adding the perspective of strengthening Japan-U.S. supply chain cooperation to the “Action Plan 2.0,” the Government of Japan will implement various initiatives in an all-Japan manner to further promote understanding with Japan at the grassroots level.

3 Canada

(1) Situation in Canada

In July, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau shuffled his cabinet in an attempt to revive the Government’s stagnant approval rating. He continued to appoint women to key cabinet posts, including Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mélanie Joly, maintaining an equal number of men and women in the cabinet. With a cabinet that is more focused on economic issues of public concern, the Trudeau administration is prioritizing creating jobs for the middle class while pursuing bold climate change policies, as well as working to create a diverse and inclusive society that is considerate of indigenous peoples, LGBTQ people, and immigrants.

On the economic front, the economy is easing up due to the downturn in the global economy, and according to the Fall Economic Statement released by the Department of Finance Canada in November, the real GDP growth rate in 2023 is expected to be 1.1% (3.4% last year), the unemployment rate to be 5.4% (5.3% last year), and the annual average of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to be 3.8% (the annual average of 6.8% last year). In order to ease inflationary pressures, the Bank of Canada raised its policy interest rate seven times in 2022 and three times in 2023, from 4.25% to 5.0%. The inflation trend will continue to be a focus of attention.

On the diplomatic front, in accordance with the Indo-Pacific Strategy announced in November 2022, the Government dispatched three frigates to the Indo-Pacific region and strengthened the presence of Canadian Armed Forces. In the economic and trade fields, Canada further strengthened cooperation with

like-minded countries in the region to strengthen supply chains and maintain the high standards of the CPTPP and continued to further strengthen its engagement in the Indo-Pacific region. In September, Canada established a “Strategic Partnership” with ASEAN and set out to strengthen cooperative relations, including cooperating in addressing security issues such as cybersecurity, maritime security, and nuclear non-proliferation, and agreed to aim to reach a final agreement on the Canada-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by 2025. In response to the situation in Ukraine, Prime Minister Trudeau visited Ukraine in June for the second time following his visit in May 2022. In September, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his wife also visited Canada. Canada continued to actively implement severe sanctions against Russia and support Ukraine and signed a modernized Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement.

Tensions also remain in relations with China, with both countries designating their respective consuls as *persona non grata* (an undesirable person) in May, and in October the Government of Canada announced that there had been incidents of intercepts of Canadian military aircraft and helicopters by Chinese military aircraft. On the other hand, there have been cases of cooperation with China in areas such as the environment, including Minister of Environment and Climate Change Steven Guilbeault’s visit to China in August. In relations with Taiwan, a Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Arrangement was signed between the Canadian trade office in Taipei and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Canada in December, and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Montreal was opened in the same month. In response to the situation in Israel and Palestine, Foreign Minister Joly visited the Middle East and announced that the Government of Canada would provide humanitarian assistance totaling 60 million Canadian dollars (approximately 6.6 billion Japanese yen).

(2) Japan-Canada Relations

From January 2023 to the end of January 2024, three summits and five foreign ministers’ meetings were held between Japan and Canada.

Prime Minister Kishida visited Ottawa from January 11 to 12 and exchanged views with Prime Minister

Trudeau on Japan-Canada relations and regional situations. Prime Minister Trudeau expressed his full support for Japan's new National Security Strategy and cooperation toward the success of the G7 Hiroshima Summit.

On April 18, Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Joly, who was in Japan to attend the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The two ministers exchanged views on the situation in Ukraine and East Asia, among other issues, and Foreign Minister Hayashi welcomed Canada's extension of its illegal ship-to-ship transfer monitoring activities.

On May 19, Prime Minister Kishida met with Prime Minister Trudeau, who was visiting Japan to attend the G7 Hiroshima Summit, and the two leaders concurred that they would work together to demonstrate to the world the G7's unwavering solidarity in addressing the various challenges facing the international community, as well as to work together to realize FOIP and launch the official negotiations on a Treaty between Japan and Canada on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters.



Japan-Canada Summit Meeting (May 19, Hiroshima Prefecture; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)



Japan-Canada Foreign Ministers' Meeting (April 18, Tokyo)

On November 7, Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Joly, who was visiting Japan to attend the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and reaffirmed their responses to the Israeli-Palestinian situation, and issues concerning China and North Korea, as well as efforts toward realizing FOIP. Furthermore, the two countries concurred to deepen cooperation on WPS, which was undertaken by both Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Foreign Minister Joly and is included in the "Japan-Canada Action Plan for contributing to a free and open Indo-Pacific region," announced in October 2022.

On November 16, Prime Minister Kishida met with Prime Minister Trudeau during the APEC Summit, and the two leaders shared the view to address the Israeli-Palestinian and regional situations and to work together on the CPTPP. In addition, they recognized the progress made in efforts by both countries in 2023 to realize FOIP, including the strengthening of cooperation in the security field following the increased presence of the Canadian Armed Forces, the signing of Memoranda of Cooperation in the field of economic security, and the visit of a trade mission to Japan. The two leaders also confirmed cooperation toward the success of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan.

On January 13, 2024, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Foreign Minister Joly's hometown of Montreal for a Japan-Canada Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Minister Kamikawa expressed her gratitude for receiving words of sympathy from the Government of Canada for the affected areas and victims of the Noto Peninsula Earthquake and the Haneda Airport runway collision. The two foreign ministers exchanged views on various issues, such as the situation in the Indo-Pacific region and the Middle East. In addition, in regard to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, touching on her own visit to Ukraine, expressed that Japan would take the lead in demonstrating solidarity with Ukraine, including contributions to efforts based on the WPS perspective. The two foreign ministers confirmed the progress of the "Japan-Canada Action Plan for contributing to a free and open Indo-Pacific region," and concurred that they would work closely together on the CPTPP, people-to-people exchanges, the success of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, and to achieve a world without nuclear weapons.

In the field of economy, in September, two memoranda of cooperation, the Memorandum concerning Battery Supply Chains and the Memorandum on Industrial Science and Technology, were signed among relevant ministers and officials from the two countries. From the end of October to early November, a trade mission of Canada (with participation from over 150 Canadian organizations) led by Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development Mary Ng visited Japan to discuss the possibility of further collaboration with Japanese companies.

Five years have passed since the CPTPP, the first economic partnership agreement between Japan and

Canada, entered into force, and trade and investment relations between the two countries have further deepened. In January 2024, the 33rd Japan-Canada Joint Economic Committee (JEC) was held in Ottawa to exchange views on recent international economic developments, including CPTPP, WTO, and Japan-Canada cooperation, including the realization of FOIP. In addition, discussions were held on six priority areas of cooperation ((a) energy, (b) infrastructure, (c) science, technology, and innovation, (d) tourism and youth exchanges, (e) improving the business environment and promoting investment, and (f) agriculture).

4

Latin America and the Caribbean

2

1 Overview

(1) Situations in Latin America and the Caribbean

Most of the countries in the Latin American and the Caribbean (hereafter referred to as “LAC”) region are Japan’s important partners that share fundamental values and principles such as freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. Today, as the free and open international order based on the rule of law is seriously challenged in the international community, cooperation with these LAC countries is becoming increasingly important. The region has great economic potential with a population of about 660 million and a gross regional product of approximately 6.25 trillion U.S. dollars. It also has abundant mineral resources and energy, which are important for decarbonization, as well as food resources. As such, the region is becoming increasingly important from the perspective of supply chain resilience and economic security of the international community, including Japan.

On the economic front, the economy of the LAC region was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but subsequently has been on a recovery trend. Although the GDP growth rate in 2023 slowed to 2.3% compared to 4.1% in 2022, the positive growth is continuing. In addition, the inflation rate (excluding in Venezuela and Argentina) is also easing, declining from 7.8% in 2022 to 5% in 2023. On the other hand, because of factors such as COVID-19 and global price increases caused by Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, the disparity between rich and poor people, which has been an issue in the LAC region for some time, has not narrowed, and the Gini coefficient, which measures income inequality, has remained high.

On the political front, presidential elections were held in Paraguay, Guatemala, Ecuador, and Argentina. In addition, with regard to Venezuela, the dialogue between the parties resumed in Barbados in October,

and it was agreed that the next presidential election would be held in the second half of 2024. However, the number of Venezuelans who have fled to neighboring countries as refugees and migrants due to the deteriorating political, economic, and social situation in the country exceeded 7.7 million as of December 2023, which continues to be a regional challenge. In Haiti, since the assassination of the president in 2021, the security situation throughout the country has deteriorated due to the activities of armed groups (gangs), and the number of internally displaced persons has also increased. In addition, stagnation of government services has worsened the living conditions of the population, which is a regional challenge.

In the LAC region, there are the Nikkei (Japanese immigrants and their descendants) communities numbering approximately 3.1 million, or about 60% of the world’s Nikkei population. The Nikkei communities in the region have fostered a sense of affinity towards Japan in LAC countries through contributions to the local communities for more than 100 years. On the other hand, generations have transitioned over 100 years since the Japanese migration began, and the challenge is how to deepen ties between Japan and the communities, including among the younger generation.

(2) Japanese Diplomacy towards Latin America and the Caribbean Countries

Japan’s diplomacy towards the LAC region has developed under the guiding principle of the three “Juntos!!” (meaning “together,” namely “progress together,” “lead together,” and “inspire together”) announced by Prime Minister Abe in 2014. In December 2018, Prime Minister Abe summarized the results under this principle for the entire region and announced the concept of the Initiative to Enhance Connectivity between Japan and the LAC region as the guideline on the fruits in each bilateral relation. Japan has been aiming to deepen cooperative

relations with LAC countries based on this concept in areas such as cooperation to maintain and strengthen the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” and the free and open international order based on the rule of law, cooperation in the international arena, response to global issues such as climate change, and economic relations.

In 2023, bearing in mind Japan’s status as holding the G7 Presidency, non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) until 2024, and G20 member state, Prime Minister Kishida took the opportunities of the G7, G20, UN General Assembly (UNGA), and other multilateral meetings to meet with the leaders of Brazil and Peru. In addition, Foreign Minister Hayashi met with key figures from various countries, including Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers. In January, he visited Mexico, Ecuador, Brazil, and Argentina, which are UNSC non-permanent members and G20 member states in the LAC region. From April to May, he visited five countries: Trinidad and Tobago as well as Barbados, bearing in mind strengthening cooperation toward Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024, and Peru, Chile, and Paraguay in South America. Moreover, Foreign Minister Kamikawa exchanged views with Prime Ministers and held foreign ministers’ meetings with Brazil, Mexico, and Barbados during the UNGA High-Level Week in September, and with Peru and Chile in November during the APEC Ministerial Meeting. Furthermore, many Ministers, State Ministers, and Parliamentary Vice-Ministers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and other relevant ministries and agencies of Japan visited LAC countries, including State Minister for Foreign Affairs TAKEI Shunsuke, who visited Jamaica and Saint Lucia in May, the Dominican Republic in July, and Uruguay and Paraguay in August.

On the economic front, supply chain connections are strengthening, as shown in the nearly doubling of the number of Japanese companies operating in the LAC region since 2011. Japan is working on promoting free trade together with LAC countries including through the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), in which Mexico, Peru, and Chile participate.

In the field of development cooperation, for some areas of the LAC region that have achieved economic growth, South-South cooperation is being accelerated by countries that have already “graduated” or will “graduate” from the status of recipient countries on the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) List of ODA Recipients by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Japan is promoting triangular cooperation with these countries.

2 Regional Organizations

In addition to the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)¹ and the Organization of American States (OAS), the following regional organizations in the LAC region conduct policy coordination on various issues. There is also the Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC), which consists of 36 member states. In November, Japan invited six young leaders of FEALAC member states to Japan to exchange views on the “use of digital transformation (DX), green transformation (GX), science, and technology in the field of food security.”

(1) Pacific Alliance

The Pacific Alliance (composed of Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru; hereafter referred to as “PA”) aims to promote free mobility of goods, services, and more within the region and to build a foundation for expansion into the Asia-Pacific region. In 2021, Singapore became the PA’s first Associate State. As of the end of December 2023, Ecuador and Costa Rica were in negotiations to become member states, and Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea (ROK) were in negotiations to become Associate States.

Japan is an observer state of the PA, and places importance on cooperation with it as a group with which Japan shares fundamental values. At a relevant meeting of the PA held in Mexico City in November 2022, Foreign Minister Hayashi participated in a video message and spoke about the promotion of specific cooperation with the PA in the field of disaster risk reduction and other areas.

¹ CELAC: Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States)

(2) Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR)²

MERCOSUR (composed of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay) decided to officially admit Bolivia to MERCOSUR, which had previously been an Associate State, in December. With a few exceptions, tariffs have been eliminated for all goods traded within the MERCOSUR region. It also signed a free trade agreement (FTA) with Singapore in December, and negotiations are underway with the ROK, Canada, and other countries. Meanwhile, Venezuela's participation has been suspended.

(3) Caribbean Community (CARICOM)³

CARICOM was founded by 14 Caribbean nations for economic integration and foreign policy coordination. It has a large presence in the international arena due to its coordinated actions. Although CARICOM countries include many countries with relatively high incomes, they are threatened by natural disasters such as catastrophic hurricanes almost every year and also face vulnerabilities particular to small island states due to the small size of their populations and economies. In Haiti, the administrative and legislative systems have not been functioning adequately due to domestic political turmoil following the assassination of the president in 2021. There are concerns that the humanitarian situation of the people in Haiti will deteriorate due to the growing power of armed groups (gangs). In response, the UNSC decided in October to dispatch a Multinational Security Support Mission to Haiti. In light of the Mission's dispatch, Japan decided to provide additional assistance of approximately 14 million U.S. dollars for the purpose of restoring the security and humanitarian situation.

Japan is leading its diplomacy in accordance with the three pillars for Japan-CARICOM cooperation ((a) Cooperation towards sustainable development, including overcoming the vulnerabilities particular to small island states; (b) Deepening and expanding fraternal bonds of cooperation and friendship; and (c) Cooperation in addressing challenges of the international community).



Japan-Trinidad and Tobago Foreign Ministers' Meeting (May 1, Trinidad and Tobago)



State Minister for Foreign Affairs Takei attends the Meeting of the Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) of CARICOM and unveils the logo for the Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024 (May 17, Kingston, Jamaica)

Japan is also providing support to high-income level countries based on their development needs and economic capabilities.

In regard to relations with Japan, for the Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024, Foreign Minister Hayashi became the first Japanese Foreign Minister to visit Trinidad and Tobago as well as Barbados in May. Also in May, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Takei participated in the Meeting of the Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) of CARICOM held in Jamaica, where he presented the logo of the Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024 together with the ministers of foreign affairs of various CARICOM countries. In addition, Foreign Minister Kamikawa exchanged views to strengthen bilateral relations and relations with CARICOM, including during her meeting with Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley of

² MERCOSUR: Mercado Común del Sur (Southern Common Market)

³ CARICOM: Caribbean Community (Member countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana, Grenada, Jamaica, Suriname, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti, Bahamas, Barbados, and Belize)



Meeting between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Prime Minister Mottley of Barbados (September 20, New York, U.S.)



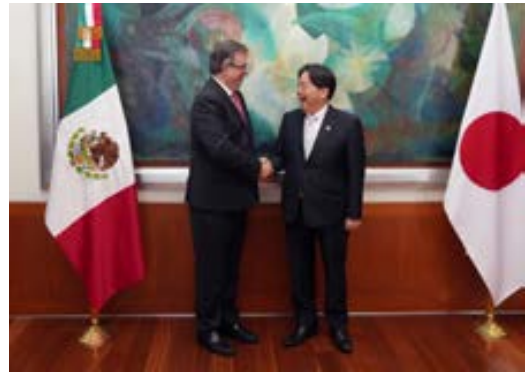
State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge attends the reception for the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Jamaica together with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Johnson Smith (center) and Ambassador of Jamaica to Japan Richards (right) (February 8, 2024, Tokyo)

Barbados at the UN General Assembly in September. In February 2024, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Kamina Johnson Smith of Jamaica visited Japan as a guest of MOFA, during which she held a foreign ministers' meeting and attended the reception to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-Jamaica diplomatic relations with State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUGE Yoshifumi.

3 LAC Countries

(1) Mexico

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who was inaugurated in December 2018, has promoted policies emphasizing domestic affairs such as combating corruption, correcting disparities, and improving security, while continuing free trade since his administration took office. In 2023, the fifth year of his administration, he continued to maintain a high approval rating.



Japan-Mexico Foreign Ministers' Meeting (January 5, Mexico City, Mexico)

In regard to relations with Japan, the 135th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-Mexico diplomatic relations was marked by active exchanges in the political and economic fields. In January, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Mexico on his first overseas trip in 2023, during which he held a foreign ministers' meeting with Secretary of Foreign Affairs Marcelo Ebrard and met with Secretary of Economy Raquel Buenrostro. In August, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a telephone call with Secretary of Foreign Affairs Alicia Bárcena immediately after her appointment to the position. In September, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Foreign Secretary Bárcena held a foreign minister's meeting during the High-Level Week of the 78th Session of the UNGA, in which they concurred that they would cooperate between the female foreign ministers not only to further strengthen bilateral relations, but also to address global issues and regional situations in various areas. The two Ministers also confirmed the importance of maintaining the high standards of the CPTPP, concurred on continued close cooperation, and discussed improving the business environment in Mexico.

In regard to economic relations, approximately 1,300 bases of Japanese companies, the largest number in the LAC region, have established operations in Mexico. In June, the 13th meeting of the Committee for the Improvement of the Business Environment, which was established under the Japan-Mexico Economic Partnership Agreement, was held in Mexico City, with Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs AKIMOTO Masatoshi serving as co-chair from the Japanese side. The meeting was attended by representatives from the public and private sectors of both Japan and Mexico, and the participants discussed and

exchanged views on issues and concerns related to the business environment.

In regard to relations with third countries, Mexico continued to place emphasis on relations with the United States (U.S.), holding frequent discussions not only on economic relations but also on issues such as immigration and narcotics. The U.S.-Mexico High-Level Economic Dialogue and the U.S.-Mexico High-Level Security Dialogue were respectively held in September and October with the attendance of ministers of both countries, and dialogue and initiatives have continued based on the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). In November, at the request of President Joseph Biden of the U.S., President López Obrador attended the APEC Leaders' Meeting (San Francisco, U.S.) for the first time since his inauguration, and held summit meetings with the U.S., Canada, and China.

In October, President Obrador held the “Meeting for a Fraternal Neighborhood with Wellbeing” in Palenque, in the southern state of Chiapas to explore structural causes and comprehensive solutions to the migration phenomenon in the LAC region, which was attended by leaders and ministers from the region.

(2) Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Panama, Belize, and Honduras)

The Alliance for Development in Democracy (ADD), established in 2021 by Costa Rica, Panama, and the Dominican Republic (with Ecuador joining in 2022), positions itself as a group that shares universal values and principles, including democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. In cooperation with the U.S., it aims for



Japan-Guatemala Foreign Ministers' Meeting (February 23, New York, U.S.)



Courtesy call on Prime Minister Kishida by Vice President Peña of the Dominican Republic (April 4, Tokyo; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

development through a highly transparent process that respects human rights in the region, and promotion of cooperation, trade, and investment. In 2023, the ADD expressed concern about the situation in Haiti and the situation in Guatemala after the presidential election run-off in August. As for the Guatemalan presidential election, candidate Bernardo Arévalo was elected as the new president as a result of the run-off.

Regarding relations with Japan, in January, Deputy Secretary of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Gerardo Torres Zelaya of Honduras visited Japan and held wide-ranging exchanges of views with government officials and others. In February, during the UNGA Emergency Special Session on Ukraine, there was a Japan-Guatemala Foreign Ministers' Meeting in which the ministers exchanged wide-ranging views on bilateral relations and cooperation in the international arena, and Guatemala concurred to closely cooperate with Japan in promoting FOIP. In April, Vice President Raquel Peña Rodríguez of the Dominican Republic, who was making a working visit to Japan, paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister Kishida. She welcomed Japan's initiative on FOIP, and exchanged views on regional situations in East Asia, Ukraine, Haiti, and elsewhere. In May, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Adolfo Franco Sousa of Panama paid a visit to Japan in which he exchanged views with government officials and visited regional cities to strengthen relations in the maritime field.

(3) Cuba

President Miguel Díaz-Canel was reelected (five-year term, up to two consecutive terms) by the National Assembly of People's Power, which convened in April.

Immediately after his inauguration, President Díaz-Canel appointed the prime minister, cabinet members, and other officials, with Prime Minister Manuel Marrero Cruz retaining his position. On the diplomatic front, the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Group of 77 and China was held in Cuba's capital city Havana in September, and the Havana Declaration was adopted with "Current Development Challenges" as its main theme. The deteriorating situation of Cuba's economy is becoming even more severe due to COVID-19, international affairs, and other factors, and the lives of the people have become even more difficult.

In regard to relations with Japan, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Josefina de la Caridad Vidal Ferreiro visited Japan in October, exchanged views on a wide range of fields with government officials and others, and held a Japan-Cuba Policy Dialogue.

(4) Brazil

The administration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, which was inaugurated in January, is working to address global issues while raising initiatives for addressing environmental problems, including the deforestation of the Amazon as important political issues. In terms of economic policy, the administration is deliberating on tax reform and focusing on the promotion of "neo-industrialization" including the digital and green sectors.

In regard to relations with Japan, in January, Ambassador on Special Mission OBUCHI Yuko (a member of the House of Representatives) attended the inauguration ceremony of President Lula and held meetings with government officials and people related to the National Congress. Foreign Minister Hayashi also visited Brazil and met with Foreign Minister Mauro Luiz Iecker Vieira. In May, Prime Minister Kishida met with President Lula, who attended the G7 Hiroshima Summit because Brazil was an invited country, and the two leaders concurred on cooperating toward the G20 Summit in 2024, which Brazil will chair. In September, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a meeting with Foreign Minister Vieira during the UNGA High-Level Week. In addition, from September 30, visa exemption for holders of ordinary Brazilian passport visiting Japan for the purpose of "Short-Term Stay" activities began, thereby realizing mutual short-stay visa exemption between the two countries.



Japan-Brazil Summit Meeting (May 20, Hiroshima Prefecture; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

Moreover, public and private sector dialogue toward strengthening economic relations between the two countries is being invigorated, including a meeting of the Wise Group for Strategic Economic Partnership between Japan and Brazil held in April, and a meeting of the Japan-Brazil Business Council held in July.

(5) Argentina

The Alberto Fernández administration continued to face domestic problems in terms of foreign currency revenues and investment, due to causes including the fact that the historic drought caused a significant decline in agricultural production, a major export commodity. Argentina also recorded the worst inflation rate in the past 30 years and failed to realize economic growth that its citizens can actually feel in their lives. In the midst of the economic crisis, a presidential election was held. The opposition party candidate, Javier Milei, who criticized the established political parties and advocated for a "small government" with austerity measures and privatization of state-owned enterprises, won the election and was inaugurated in December.

In regard to relations with Japan, 2023 marked the 125th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-Argentina diplomatic relations, and the Foreign Ministers of both countries made reciprocal visits. In January, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Argentina, paid a courtesy call to President Fernandez, and met with Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship Santiago Andrés Cafiero and Minister of Economy Sergio Tomás Massa. In August, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship Cafiero visited Japan, paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister Kishida, and held meetings with Foreign Minister



Courtesy call on Prime Minister Kishida by Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship Cafiero of Argentina (August 29, Tokyo; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

Hayashi; Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry NISHIMURA Yasutoshi; and Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology NAGAOKA Keiko. In December, Ambassador on Special Mission SANTO Akiko (a member of the House of Councillors) attended the inauguration of President Milei and paid a courtesy call to President Milei. Through various opportunities, Japan and Argentina confirmed the importance of strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation in the international arena through the Nikkei community and other bonds as important “strategic partners” that share fundamental values and principles.

(6) Peru

President Pedro Castillo was removed from office in December 2022, and Vice President Dina Boluarte

assumed the presidency. In January 2023, protests were held in the country demanding that the presidential election be moved forward. President Boluarte herself submitted a constitutional amendment to push forward the election to the Congress, but the Congress rejected it. Public attention was focused on the damage caused by Hurricane Yaku and other issues, and since then, demands to move the election forward have waned.

In regard to relations with Japan, the 150th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Peru was marked with reciprocal visits by the Foreign Ministers of both countries (See the Column on this page). In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Peru, paid a courtesy call to President Boluarte, and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Ana Cecilia Gervasi Diaz. From August to September, Foreign Minister Gervasi visited Japan and met with Foreign Minister Hayashi. During the APEC Ministerial Meeting held in the U.S. in November, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Foreign Minister Javier González-Olaechea Franco held the third Japan-Peru Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in 2023. In addition, at the Summit Video Teleconference Meeting between Prime Minister Kishida and President Boluarte, which was held in August to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-Peru diplomatic relations, the leaders concurred and confirmed that a roadmap for bilateral cooperation in various fields would be formulated for 2024.

COLUMN

Old Friends Across the Sea: the 150th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Peru



In 2023, Japan and Peru celebrated the 150th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Japan has had diplomatic relations with Peru longer than any other Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries. Diplomatic relations between Japan and Peru were also the first such relations to ever be established between Asian and LAC countries. This column introduces the history of friendly relations between the two countries, as well as the various initiatives undertaken to commemorate the 150th anniversary.

● A History of Close Friendly Relations

Diplomatic relations between Japan and Peru began with the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation on August 21, 1873, and have developed favorably through today. The foundation for the bilateral relations is the Nikkei community in Peru, which has the longest history in South America and has grown to 200,000 people, the third largest in the world now. Since the arrival of the immigrant ship “*Sakura Maru*” with 790 Japanese immigrants in

the port of Callao on April 3, 1899, Japanese immigrants have contributed to the growth and development of Peru as members of Peruvian society, while inheriting and passing on Japanese culture and traditions. In addition, the Peruvian Nikkei community has not only served as a bridge between the two countries, but many Nikkei Peruvians are also active in Japan, the U.S., the LAC region, and European countries.

Japan and Peru are “strategic partners” that share fundamental values and principles. The two countries cooperate in the international arena through the United Nations (UN), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and other means. On the economic front, they have built close relations including through the bilateral economic partnership agreement, tax convention, and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement on Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Peru has received the most Official Development Assistance (ODA) from Japan in the LAC region through 2021, and in recent years, Japanese companies have participated in infrastructure projects in Peru through government-to-government (G2G) contracts. On the cultural front, a large number of Japanese universities are contributing to Peruvian archaeology, and exchanges between the two countries are becoming more diverse, such as conferences for university presidents.



Coin depicting Machu Picchu and Mount Fuji that commemorate the 150th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Peru (top left), commemorative stamps issued by Japan Post (right) and *Servicios Postales del Perú* (bottom left)

● Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations

In order to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2023, Japan and Peru implemented exchanges and projects in various fields including politics and diplomacy, economy, and culture.

On the diplomatic front, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Peru in May, Foreign Minister Gervasi Diaz visited Japan in September, and the third Japan-Peru Foreign Ministers' Meeting in 2023 was held during the APEC Ministerial Meeting in the U.S. in November. In addition, at the Japan-Peru Summit Video Teleconference Meeting held in August, the leaders shared the view and confirmed that a road map for future cooperation in various fields would be drawn up by 2024. On the cultural front, the Japan Foundation's first office in Spanish-speaking countries in South America was newly established in Lima, the capital of Peru, and the Peruvian Japanese Association (APJ) received a Japan Foundation Award for its contributions to Japanese language education. In November, Her Imperial Highness Princess Kako of Akishino visited Peru, where she received an enthusiastic welcome from the Peruvian people. She paid a courtesy call to President Dina Boluarte, participated in a ceremony to welcome the Princess and commemorated the 150th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, and attended another ceremony hosted by the APJ commemorating the 150th of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Japan and Peru will mark the 125th anniversary of the Japanese immigration to Peru in 2024, and plan to continue close exchanges. Although Japan and Peru are located on opposite sides of the globe, the two countries have connections in diverse fields such as politics, economy, culture, and academia, and it is expected that they will continue to develop friendly relations for a long time to come.



President Boluarte and Her Imperial Highness Princess Kako of Akishino (November 7, Lima, Peru; Photo: Imperial Household Agency)



Foreign Minister Hayashi pays a courtesy call to Peruvian President Boluarte (May 3, Lima, Peru)

(7) Chile

The administration of President Gabriel Boric, which was inaugurated in March 2022, aims to reduce disparities and improve welfare, and is touting promotion of reform of social security policies, including pensions and the tax system. However, the ruling leftist party, which supports the administration, is in the minority in both the upper and lower houses of the National Congress, making it difficult for the administration to implement its various policies. On the foreign policy front, the administration has set forth its approach of placing importance on human rights, gender, the environment, and multilateralism.

In regard to the new constitution-drafting process, following the rejection of the proposed new constitution in a referendum in September 2022, the Constitutional Council consisting of 50 members newly appointed through elections was formed in June 2023, and a new draft constitution was prepared on the initiative of this Council. However, in a referendum held in December of the same year, the new draft constitution was again rejected, and President Boric announced the end of the new constitution-drafting process during his term.

In addition, the CPTPP entered into force in Chile in February 2023, making Chile the 10th signatory state.

In regard to relations with Japan, the Government of Japan provided emergency relief supplies at the request of the Government of Chile in response to a major forest fire that broke out in the central and southern regions of Chile at the end of January. In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Chile, paid a courtesy call to President Boric and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Alberto Leo van Klaveren Stork, during which the two ministers signed the Japan-Chile Agreement on Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation. During the APEC Ministerial Meeting in November, Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Foreign Minister van Klaveren, and the two ministers concurred on deepening bilateral cooperation in fields such as critical mineral resources and clean energy and confirmed bilateral collaboration in maintaining the high standards of the CPTPP. They also exchanged views on the international situation and confirmed cooperation in

the international arena as “strategic partners” that share values and principles.

(8) Uruguay

The Luis Lacalle Pou administration, which was inaugurated in March 2020, has maintained a high approval rating with its stable management since its inauguration to the second half of the current term (as of the end of 2023). Uruguay ranked first in the LAC region in the Democracy Index.⁴ In economic policy, the administration adheres to free trade principles and places importance on market expansion and liberalization. In terms of foreign policy, it has developed diplomacy based on the values of democracy, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights.

In regard to relations with Japan, since President Lacalle Pou’s visit to Japan in 2022, exchanges have been conducted in a variety of fields. The working holiday program began operation in March 2023. On the diplomatic front, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Takei visited Uruguay in August and paid a courtesy call to Vice President Beatriz Argimón Cedeira. In addition, in October, one year after President Lacalle Pou’s visit to Japan, the first session of the Japan-Uruguay Joint Committee on cross-sectoral cooperation, which was agreed to be established at the summit meeting during President Lacalle Pou’s visit, and the first Japan-Uruguay Policy Consultation in five years were held.

(9) Paraguay

Presidential elections were held in Paraguay in April, and Santiago Peña Palacios, the candidate from the ruling Colorado Party, won the election and assumed the presidency in August. Following the previous administration, he has defended fundamental values and principles such as the rule of law and respect for human rights and has focused on job creation.

In regard to relations with Japan, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Paraguay in May, marking the second visit by a Japanese foreign minister to the country. Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Julio César Arriola Ramírez and paid a courtesy call to President-elect Peña shortly after his election as president. In August, State Minister for

4 Source: Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index 2022



Japan-Paraguay Foreign Ministers' Meeting (May 5, Asuncion, Paraguay)

Foreign Affairs Takei attended the presidential inauguration ceremony as an Ambassador on Special Mission and paid courtesy calls to President Mario Abdo Benítez and President Peña. Furthermore, at the end of August, Foreign Minister Hayashi and Foreign Minister Rubén Darío Ramírez Lezcano, who had just assumed his position, held a telephone call. Through the series of dignitaries' visits and meetings, opinions were exchanged on common bilateral issues and the international situation, and bilateral relations between Japan and Paraguay became closer.

(10) Colombia

The Gustavo Francisco Petro Urrego administration, which was inaugurated in August 2022, is advancing deliberations on major social reform bills, including health insurance system reform, pension reform, and labor reform. However, no significant progress has been seen due to conflicts within the ruling coalition. Meanwhile, President Petro has made it his greatest mission to achieve “total peace” with the armed forces in the country, and he has been promoting peace negotiations with the armed forces, including the National Liberation Army (ELN).⁵ President Petro has also positioned climate change countermeasures as an urgent issue and is promoting decarbonization.

In regard to relations with Japan, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Akimoto visited Colombia in June, held meetings with key government figures, and exchanged views with members of Japanese companies. In addition, Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry SATOMI Ryuji visited Colombia

in July, signed a memorandum of cooperation on the establishment of a Joint Committee between Japan and Colombia on Cooperation in Trade, Investment, and Industry, and confirmed that the two countries will advance bilateral trade and investment promotion.

(11) Venezuela

The inauguration ceremony for President Nicolás Maduro was held in 2019 amidst doubts about the legitimacy of the presidential election held in 2018. In 2020, the election for Venezuela's National Assembly was held without the participation of the main opposition parties, and the Maduro administration's party was declared the winner. In response, people in Venezuela, including the main opposition party, as well as the international community reacted against the election, claiming that it lacked legitimacy. Similarly, Japan has been calling for the restoration of democracy in Venezuela through the early implementation of a free and fair election.

In October 2023, a dialogue between the parties in Venezuela was held and a political agreement was signed for the implementation of free and fair elections, including, but not limited to, the 2024 presidential election. Based on the agreement, it was decided to hold the presidential election in the second half of 2024 and to accept international electoral observation missions. In the same month, the primary election was held among opposition parties for the presidential election, and María Corina Machado, leader of the Vente Venezuela party, won by a wide margin over the second-place finisher.

Due to the worsening economic, social, and humanitarian situation in the country, Venezuelan nationals are continuing to flow into neighboring countries as refugees and migrants, and receiving them has become a regional challenge. Japan is continuing to provide support to the Venezuelan people, including people fleeing from Venezuela, as well as to affected neighboring countries.

(12) Bolivia

Bolivia's economic structure depends on exports of natural gas and other natural resources. However,

⁵ ELN: Ejército de Liberación Nacional, National Liberation Army

the country's budget deficit is ballooning and foreign currency shortages are becoming more serious due to a sharp decline in natural gas reserves. On the other hand, Bolivia's estimated lithium resources are the largest in the world. Bolivia is increasing its activities for lithium exploration and mining, including the Government of Bolivia signing an agreement with Chinese and Russian companies for large-scale lithium production in June.

In regard to relations with Japan, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Akimoto visited Bolivia in June, paid courtesy calls on and held meetings with Vice President David Choquehuanca Céspedes, Foreign Minister Rogelio Mayta, and other government officials, and confirmed that efforts would be made to further strengthen bilateral relations. In June, Japan signed the Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement with the Government of Bolivia, which entered into force. In October, the sixth Japan-Bolivia Policy Consultations was held.

(13) Ecuador

In May, President Guillermo Lasso dissolved the National Assembly and decided to move forward the presidential election. After the first round of voting in August, a runoff election was held in October. Candidate Daniel Noboa won the election and was inaugurated in November as the youngest president in Ecuador's history. The challenge for President Noboa is whether he can achieve results in the areas of security, job creation, attracting domestic and foreign investment, and improving education and healthcare systems during his short term of office, which ends in May 2025.

In regard to relations with Japan, Ecuador is serving as a non-permanent member of the UNSC along with Japan for two years beginning in January 2023. The two countries are cooperating to address the current difficult international situation and to strengthen UN functions, including UNSC reform. In January, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Ecuador and held a foreign ministers' meeting, during which Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility Juan Carlos Holguin

expressed support for Japan's FOIP efforts to maintain and strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law. Further cooperation between Japan and Ecuador is underway, including the two countries signing an Exchange of Notes in November at Foreign Minister Holguin's request on the provision of fisheries control vessels as a measure against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

(14) Collaboration with the Nikkei Community

The Nikkei community has been the foundation for the sense of affinity toward Japan in LAC countries. Nevertheless, generations have transitioned over 100 years since Japanese immigration to LAC countries began, and thus, how to deepen ties to Japan among the younger generation has become a challenge. Amid this situation, in addition to inviting next-generation Nikkei people to visit Japan, MOFA also implements measures towards strengthening collaboration with the Nikkei community, through supporting events by next-generation Nikkei people in various LAC countries and creating networks among them. In January, MOFA established the Division for Collaboration with Communities of Japanese Immigrants and Descendants ("Nikkei") in Latin America to implement these measures more comprehensively (See the Column on page 128).

In February, 31 young Nikkei people and people related to the Nikkei community from 13 LAC countries visited Japan for exchanges on Japanese culture and business. Seven next-generation Nikkei leaders from five LAC countries visited Japan in October, paid courtesy calls to Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary MORIYA Hiroshi and State Minister for Foreign Affairs HORII Iwao, and held discussions on the current situation and issues of the Nikkei community. In addition, the FY2023 supplementary budget allocates 1.1 billion Japanese yen to implement projects aimed at promoting understanding of Japan in the LAC region and contributing to regional revitalization through cooperation with the Nikkei community in the LAC region.

COLUMN

Bond with the Nikkei Community in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) Region

The Nikkei (Japanese immigrants and descendants) community of approximately 3.1 million people in Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries is the foundation of the good bilateral relations between Japan and LAC countries, as it makes people in the region feel close to Japan. The Nikkei community in the region has a history of over 100 years, and the emigrants overcame many hardships in places far from Japan with a different environment and culture. Today, subsequent Nikkei generations are active in various areas of society. In January, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the Division for Collaboration with Communities of Japanese Immigrants and Descendants (“Nikkei”) in Latin America with the aim of promoting partnerships with the Nikkei community and further strengthening relations between Japan and LAC countries.

As one of the specific cooperation programs, the Division invited next-generation Nikkei leaders to Japan in October. The purpose of this program is to provide the next-generation Nikkei leaders who are active in the Nikkei community in their respective countries with direct experiences of Japan in hope of their becoming a bridge between Japan and the LAC region in a new era.

In 2023, seven next-generation Nikkei leaders from five LAC countries visited Japan. Erika Akemi Tomioka, a third-generation Nikkei person from Manaus City in the center of Brazil’s Amazon region, participated in the program. Tomioka is the cultural coordinator of a Nikkei organization and is involved in promoting Japanese culture through Japanese language, Japanese festivals, pop culture, and other areas. The third “Jungle Matsuri,” organized by the Japanese Brazilian Association of Western Amazon and for which Tomioka worked hard to prepare, attracted 35,000 attendees. The festival has become Northern Brazil’s largest event that introduces Japanese culture.

Tomioka said that the presence of the Nikkei community is evident in the respect for the environment in education in the Amazon region, which is a value brought about by Nikkei people. She also noted that many young Japanese people immigrated to the Amazon region in the past, and that their determination has been firmly passed on to the current Nikkei community. Japanese language education is very popular in Manaus, and Manaus is the only city in Brazil that has state schools that offer bilingual Portuguese and Japanese education.

Tomioka is also the coordinator of a bilingual school, but most of the students are non-Nikkei people. Japanese language and culture are favorably accepted by many people, both Nikkei and non-Nikkei, in the local community.

The Nikkei community has a large presence in various parts of the LAC region, as it does in the Amazon area. The Division for Collaboration with Communities of “Nikkei” in Latin America will continue to promote various initiatives to strengthen the bond between Japan and the Nikkei community.



Local Nikkei people serving as organizers for the Jungle Matsuri held by the Japanese Brazilian Association of Western Amazon (August, Brazil)



Students learning *Shodo* calligraphy at a bilingual school where Tomioka serves as coordinator (Brazil)

5

Europe

2

1 Overview

<The Importance of Cooperation with Europe, with which Japan Shares Values and Principles>

The European Union (EU) and European countries are important partners for Japan, sharing values and principles such as freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. It is becoming even more important to strengthen cooperation with the EU and European countries under the recognition that the security of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable in order to respond to challenges to the values and principles to which Japan and Europe attach importance and to defend the free and open international order based on the rule of law in the midst of intensifying geopolitical competition that threatens the existing international order, such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine. In addition, the need for international coordination in addressing global issues such as climate change and infectious diseases has further increased the need for cooperation with the EU and European countries.

European countries pursue common policies across a wide range of fields such as diplomacy and security, economy, and state finance, through various frameworks including the EU. They also play an important role in formulating standards in the international community. The countries also influence international opinion benefiting from their language, history, cultural and artistic activities, and through communication activities utilizing major media organizations and think tanks. Cooperation with Europe is also important for enhancing Japan's presence and influence in the international community.

<Russia's Aggression Against Ukraine and Europe>

In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine that began in February 2022, severe sanctions against Russia and strong support for Ukraine were continued in 2023. As the holder of the G7 Presidency, Japan showed its leadership to ensure that the G7 unify in promoting severe sanctions against Russia and strong support for Ukraine to stop Russia's aggression against Ukraine as soon as possible. In addition, Japan has shown its solidarity with Ukraine at various levels, including the summit and foreign minister levels, such as Prime Minister Kishida's visit to Kyiv in March, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to Japan to attend the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, and the G7 Leaders' Video Conference in December, and has closely cooperated with Ukraine to provide support tailored to the Ukrainian people.

In Europe, Russia's aggression against Ukraine has become one of the most important issues, leading to sanctions against Russia and support for Ukraine. The EU, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO),¹ and various countries have been united in strongly condemning Russia. They have imposed severe sanctions against Russia, including financial sanctions, travel bans on individuals and entities and restrictions on imports and exports, and are continuing their solidarity with and support for Ukraine.

For example, the EU provides economic assistance such as macrofinancial assistance, defense equipment support through the European Peace Facility,² and training of Ukrainian soldiers through the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine).³ NATO is also working on creating a

¹ NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization. For more information, see the MOFA website for details: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/nato/index.html>

² European Peace Facility: System established in March 2021 to enable the EU to finance military or defense activities under the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and to enhance the EU's capacity for conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and strengthening international security.

³ EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine): A military mission established by the EU in October 2022 to support Ukraine. It provides training to the Ukraine military.



multi-year plan to assist Ukraine and has stated that it will extend an invitation to Ukraine to join NATO if its member countries agree and conditions are met. The United Kingdom (UK) has provided a total of 9.3 billion UK pounds in military, humanitarian, and economic assistance, including the provision of “Challenger 2” tanks, and hosted a conference on Ukraine’s reconstruction in June. France has provided humanitarian and economic assistance in addition to military aid totaling 3.2 billion euros, including the provision of cruise missiles and armored and light combat vehicles. Germany decided in January to provide Ukraine with Leopard 2 battle tanks, and has provided military, humanitarian, and economic assistance totaling 24 billion euros.

<Multilayered, Attentive Diplomacy with Europe>

In Europe, the need for values and principles such as freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, as well as compliance with the rule of law and international law, is being further recognized amidst the response to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. On the other hand, a fine-tuned approach is required that takes into account the diversity of European countries and their respective circumstances. Japan supports a strongly united Europe and conducts multilayered and tailored diplomacy for it. In 2023, with the resumption of in-person visits by dignitaries which had previously been constrained by COVID-19, Japan confirmed close cooperation with European countries, the EU, NATO, and others by actively conducting meetings taking the opportunities presented by visits to Europe by the Prime Minister and ministers, as well as visits to Japan by dignitaries.

In January, Prime Minister Kishida visited France, Italy, and the UK and held meetings with the leaders of these countries, confirming the maintenance and strengthening of the free and open international order, and the strengthening of cooperation in the security field. In addition, in July, Prime Minister Kishida attended the NATO Summit Meeting in Lithuania, as he had done the previous year. He shared with the leaders of various countries the recognition that the security of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable. Next, Prime Minister Kishida visited Brussels, where he held the 29th Japan-EU Summit Meeting and confirmed

close cooperation for maintaining and strengthening the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

During the year 2023, Prime Minister Kishida confirmed cooperation with various European countries through means such as holding meetings with the leaders of Albania, Italy, Ukraine, the UK, the Netherlands, Greece, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Norway, France, Belgium, Poland, Lithuania, and Romania.

Cooperation was also deepened in the security field. Foreign Minister Hayashi attended the Munich Security Conference (February) and the Seventh Japan-France Foreign and Defense Ministers’ Meeting (“2+2”) (May). Foreign Minister Kamikawa attended the Fifth Japan-UK Foreign and Defence Ministers’ Meeting (“2+2”) (November).

With regard to the legal framework in the security field, the Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) was signed in January and entered into force in October. In addition, there was an agreement in principle in November on the Japan-Germany Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (Japan-Germany ACSA).

Furthermore, Japan conducts public diplomacy activities including dispatch of experts, cooperation with European think tanks, and Japan’s Friendship Ties Programs “MIRAI” for intellectual and people-to-people exchange that allows young people from Europe to visit Japan. These activities are aimed to promote the accurate picture of Japan and Asia and mutual understanding. Japan is working to strengthen multilayered relations with Europe by sharing information and exchanging views with European countries, organizations, and experts in a wide range of fields, including politics, security, economics, and business.

2 Regional Situations in Europe

(1) The European Union (EU)

The EU is a political and economic union consisting of 27 member states with a total population of about 448 million. It is a strategic partner of Japan that works together to uphold and strengthen the free and open

international order based on the rule of law, and to address the common challenges of the international community.

<Recent Developments of the EU>

In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the EU has adopted 12 sanctions packages against Russia since February 2022. These sanctions include asset freezes and travel restrictions on more than 1,900 individuals and entities; economic sanctions in the services field, including finance, transportation, energy, defense, and raw materials; and restrictions on the media. For the 12th sanctions package announced at the European Council meeting in December 2023, it was decided to take measures including the designation of additional entities, the addition of items subject to import and export bans such as an import ban on Russian diamonds, and the strengthening of the implementation of the oil price cap. In addition, the EU and EU member states have provided support to Ukraine in the form of macro-financial assistance, budgetary support, emergency assistance, and crisis response and humanitarian assistance, totaling approximately 40.5 billion euros (of which approximately 31 billion euros was support from the EU) (as of November 2023). In February 2024, the European Council decided to provide up to 50 billion euros in financial assistance from 2024 to 2027. Furthermore, the EU and EU member states have provided military assistance totaling over 27 billion euros. Within this total, the EU is providing assistance in the form of lethal military equipment for defensive purposes to the Ukrainian military through the European Peace Facility, as well as conducting training for 40,000 Ukrainian troops through EUMAM Ukraine, which was launched in November 2022. President Charles Michel of the European Council and President Ursula von der Leyen of the European Commission visited Kyiv in February for the 24th EU-Ukraine Summit and stated that support for Ukraine would be continued as long as necessary. With regard to Ukraine's accession to the EU, in December the European Council decided to commence negotiations on accession by Ukraine.

In addition, in response to the armed conflict between Israel and Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups since October 7, the European Commission



The 29th Japan-EU Summit Meeting (July 13, Brussels, Belgium; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

decided in November to increase humanitarian assistance to Palestine to over 100 million euros.

<EU-China Relations>

President Michel of the European Council and President von der Leyen of the European Commission visited China in December and attended the 24th EU-China Summit in Beijing.

<Japan-EU Relations>

Japan and the EU are strengthening their cooperation under the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (Japan-EU EPA), which entered into force in 2019, and the Japan-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement (Japan-EU SPA), of which provisional application started at the same time. In July, Prime Minister Kishida visited Brussels, Belgium for the 29th Japan-EU Summit Meeting with President Michel of the European Council and President von der Leyen of the European Commission. During the Summit, the leaders of Japan and the EU exchanged views on international and regional affairs, centered on Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the situation in East Asia, and North Korea, as well as security, economic security, digital partnerships, and green energy, and concurred on Japan-EU cooperation in a wide range of fields. They also welcomed the EU's decision to lift import restrictions on Japanese food products and announced the launch of a foreign ministers' strategic dialogue to take cooperation in the security field to a new level.

Prime Minister Kishida conducted telephone calls with President von der Leyen of the European Commission in March, June, and October. He also

participated in the Global Gateway Forum⁴ held by the European Commission in October by sending a video message.

In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi attended the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum co-hosted by the EU and Sweden, which held the EU Presidency in the first half of 2023. He stated that the security of Europe and that of the Indo-Pacific cannot be discussed separately, and that it is important for like-minded countries to maintain unity beyond regional boundaries in order to uphold the free and open international order based on the rule of law. In addition, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a Japan-EU Foreign Ministers' Meeting with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell Fontelles during the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Brussels, Belgium in April, and Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a Japan-EU Foreign Ministers' Meeting with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Borrell during the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Tokyo, Japan in November.

The EU, with its economic scale that follows the United States (U.S.) and China, is an important economic partner of Japan, ranking fourth among Japan's import partners, third among export partners, and second in terms of the balance of direct investment in Japan.

The Japan-EU EPA, which entered into force in 2019, created a massive economic zone accounting for approximately 20% of the global GDP, under which the ties between Japan and the EU have further strengthened. Steady implementation and operation of the agreement in various fields have been ensured through the Japan-EU EPA Joint Committee (a meeting was held in April 2023 between Foreign Minister Hayashi and Executive Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis of the European Commission) as well as specialized committees and working groups. Furthermore, in June, as a framework for promoting a broader strategic partnership with the EU, Foreign Minister Hayashi, together with Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry NISHIMURA Yasutoshi and Executive Vice President Dombrovskis of the European Commission, held the Japan-EU High-Level



Foreign Minister Hayashi attends the Japan-EU High-Level Economic Dialogue (online format) (June 27, Tokyo)

Economic Dialogue and confirmed that Japan and the EU will further cooperate with regard to Japan-EU economic policy collaboration, economic security, and the rules-based free and fair trade framework. In addition, in October, during the G7 Trade Ministers' Meeting in Osaka-Sakai, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, together with Minister for Economy, Trade and Industry Nishimura and Executive Vice President Dombrovskis of the European Commission, held the Japan-EU High-Level Economic Dialogue for the second time that year. They confirmed that an agreement in principle had been reached on the negotiations on the inclusion of provisions on the free flow of data into the Japan-EU EPA and confirmed their intention to accelerate the work toward an early signing. Furthermore, the participants also exchanged views on the most recent pending issues, such as addressing economic coercion, building resilient supply chains, and export control, and confirmed the importance of cooperation among the G7 and like-minded countries. Going forward, Japan will continue to ensure the steady implementation of the Japan-EU EPA and leverage other dialogue frameworks, including the Japan-EU High-Level Economic Dialogue, with the aim of further developing Japan-EU economic relations. Furthermore, the Japan-EU Agreement on Bilateral Agreements between Japan and the Member States of the EU for Air Services, which lays the foundation for stable development of Japan-EU air services, was signed in February and entered into force on October 1.

⁴ Global Gateway: In December 2021, the EU announced the Global Gateway, a new connectivity strategy for infrastructure development investment, to address the lack of funding for sustainable development around the world.

(2) United Kingdom

In January, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced his policy to promote efforts to achieve five commitments (halving inflation by 2023, economic growth, reducing government debt, improving the National Health Service, and taking measures against illegal immigration) in his address at the beginning of the year. In February, Prime Minister Sunak and President von der Leyen of the European Commission announced a new agreement (the Windsor Framework) on the Northern Ireland Protocol, which forms part of the UK's agreement for withdrawing from the EU, including simplification of procedures for the transport of goods between the UK mainland and Northern Ireland. This was positioned as a turning point in UK-EU cooperative relations, which had been difficult since the UK's withdrawal from the EU (Brexit). In March, the Government of the UK announced the Integrated Review Refresh, endorsed the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" vision, said that the UK had achieved its Indo-Pacific "tilt," and positioned engagement with the region as a permanent pillar of UK international policy.

There was an active dialogue between the governments of Japan and the UK at various levels, including the summit and foreign minister levels. Prime Minister Kishida visited the UK in January and held a meeting with Prime Minister Sunak, during which the Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) was signed (and subsequently entered into force in October). In addition, during the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, the two leaders also held a Japan-UK Summit Meeting and issued The Hiroshima Accord: an Enhanced Japan-UK Global Strategic Partnership.

At the foreign minister level, Foreign Minister Hayashi and Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs James Cleverly conducted a telephone call in March, an informal talk during the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in April, and meetings during the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Karuizawa, Nagano in the same month and the Ukraine Recovery Conference in the UK in June. Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs Cleverly held a meeting during the United Nations (UN) General Assembly meeting in



Japan-UK Summit Meeting (May 18, Hiroshima Prefecture; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

September, and a telephone call in October. During the G7 Foreign Ministers' meeting in November, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Defense Minister KIHARA Minoru held the Fifth Japan-UK Foreign and Defence Ministers' Meeting ("2+2"), the first such "2+2" meeting to be held in about two years and nine months, with Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs Cleverly and Secretary of State for Defence Grant Shapps. Additionally, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs Cleverly signed a memorandum of cooperation between Japan and the UK on people-to-people exchanges, and confirmed that the two countries would promote people-to-people exchanges in various fields, including youth exchanges. Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a telephone call with Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs David Cameron in November.

(3) France

In February, demonstrations against the pension reform bill proposed by the Government of France were held throughout the country, resulting in many arrests. President Emmanuel Macron, whose approval rating has been stagnant, reshuffled his cabinet in July, but only on a small scale. In September, elections were held for the Senate, and although there was a slight decline in right-wing seats and a slight increase in left-wing seats, they resulted in no major changes.

With respect to foreign affairs, at the initiative of President Macron, France held the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact in Paris in June, which was attended by Foreign Minister Hayashi from Japan.

France also held the Paris Peace Forum and various related meetings in November. This played a role in stimulating international discussions on global challenges. In addition, with regard to the situation in Ukraine, France continued sanctions against Russia and support for Ukraine. Moreover, with regard to the situation in the Middle East, France has actively conducted diplomatic activities toward stabilizing the situation. President Macron and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Catherine Colonna visited Middle Eastern countries and held the International Humanitarian Conference for the Civilian Population in Gaza in November, which was attended by Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs FUKAZAWA Yoichi from Japan. With regard to Africa, President Macron is aiming to build a new partnership with the region by reducing the number of French troops stationed in the region and strengthening economic relations, but this is facing growing anti-French sentiment in the former colonies and Russian advances in the region.

With regard to Japan-France relations, on January 1, the Government of Japan opened a consular office in Nouméa in New Caledonia, a French territory which is an important geopolitical point in the Indo-Pacific region.

In 2023, dialogues were held at various levels, including the summit and foreign minister levels. This began with Prime Minister Kishida's visit to France in January. In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Colonna, who was visiting Japan to attend the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Karuizawa, Nagano, in which the ministers concurred to further promote Japan-France cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi and Defense Minister HAMADA Yasukazu held the Seventh Japan-France Foreign and Defense Ministers' Meeting ("2+2") via videoconference with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Colonna and Minister for Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornu. In the same month, Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting in Hiroshima with President Macron, who was visiting Japan for the G7 Summit, in which the leaders concurred to further deepen bilateral cooperation in a wide range of fields, including security and economic fields. They also concurred to strengthen cooperation in the start-up sectors, including sending



Japan-France Summit Meeting (May 19, Hiroshima Prefecture; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

100 Japanese entrepreneurs to France over a five-year period, as well as cooperation on civil nuclear energy. In June, during his visit to Paris to attend the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Colonna, in which they concurred to set up a working group on economic security in the diplomatic sphere. In September, during the UN General Assembly, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held her first Japan-France Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Colonna. In October, Prime Minister Kishida and Foreign Minister Kamikawa respectively held telephone calls with President Macron and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Colonna, in which they exchanged views on the situation in the Middle East. In November, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Colonna, who was visiting Japan to attend the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting. In December, during his visit to Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) to attend the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28), Prime Minister Kishida held a telephone call with President Macron and they issued the Roadmap on Japan-France Cooperation under the "Exceptional Partnership."

(4) Germany

The three-party coalition government (the so-called "traffic light coalition") consisting of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Green Party, and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) has continued to work intensively to respond to the situation in Ukraine on the diplomatic front, including the decision to provide

Leopard 2 battle tanks in January. In addition, with regard to the situation in Israel and Palestine, Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Federal Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock visited Israel to show solidarity and to alleviate the situation, including the improvement of the humanitarian situation in Gaza. With regard to the domestic politics of Germany, while the combined approval rating of the three ruling parties has been below 50% against the backdrop of soaring energy and commodity prices and immigration issues, there have been major increases in the approval ratings of the opposition Christian Democratic Union of Germany and Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CDU/CSU), which has been increasingly critical toward the government, as well as the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. State elections were held in four states (Berlin, Bavaria, Hesse, and Bremen). The Social Democratic Party (SPD), Free Democratic Party (FDP), and Greens struggled in many states, while the AfD gained ground in many states. In November, the federal government released its Second Supplementary Budget 2021 in which 60 billion euros, earmarked for the COVID-19 crisis, were reallocated to the original measures of domestic climate change in the country from 2023. The German Constitutional Court ruled that the budget was unconstitutional, creating a situation in which the government was in a bind to pass the budget. Uncertainty in domestic politics has increased, and future developments will be closely observed.

With regard to Japan-Germany relations, the first meeting of the Japan-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations was held in March on the theme of economic security. Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action Robert Habeck, Federal Minister of the Interior and Community Christian Lindner, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Baerbock, Federal Minister of the Interior and Community Nancy Faeser, Federal Minister of Defense Boris Pistorius, and Federal Minister for Digital and Transport Volker Wissing all visited Japan for the consultations. Bilateral meetings between the ministers including the Japan-Germany Summit, and a plenary session bringing together all relevant ministers from the two countries were conducted. In addition, German dignitaries visited Japan on the occasion of the G7, for which Japan held the Presidency.



First meeting of the Japan-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations (March 18, Tokyo; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

For example, Chancellor Scholz visited Japan for the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Baerbock visited Japan for the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meetings held in April and November. In the bilateral meetings, the two countries further strengthened their relations as important partners that share fundamental values, including sharing the recognition to continue close cooperation in the realization of FOIP and the response to the situation in Ukraine. In addition, in September, official negotiations between the governments of Japan and Germany began toward the conclusion of the Japan-Germany Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (Japan-Germany ACSA) as a legal framework to promote joint activities between the Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and the German military, and an agreement in principle was reached in November.

(5) Italy

Immediately after being inaugurated, the administration of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni began taking a cooperative policy with Europe and the U.S. on the diplomatic and economic fronts, including declaring its support and continued assistance for Ukraine with regard to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and maintaining constructive relations with the EU to obtain additional funds for the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. On domestic policy, the government's approval rating, which was in the 50% range at the time of its inauguration, has been gradually declining due in part to soaring prices that have directly affected people's lives and the rapid increase in unauthorized immigrants but has remained in the 40% range. In recent years, even in the Lazio region (capital: Rome),

which had been governed by the left, the unified candidate of the center-right party, which is part of the ruling coalition, won the election, indicating that the center-right is gaining more seats at the local level.

As for Japan-Italy relations, there was dialogue at various levels, including at the summit and foreign minister levels, in light of the fact that it was concurred to upgrade Japan-Italy relations to a “Strategic Partnership” during Prime Minister Kishida’s visit to Italy in January. In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Antonio Tajani during his visit to New York to attend the emergency special session on Ukraine of the UN General Assembly and the ministerial debate at the UN Security Council. Foreign Minister Hayashi also met with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Tajani during the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Karuizawa, Nagano in April. During these meetings, Japan and Italy, which would assume the G7 Presidency following Japan, confirmed the importance of further strengthening cooperation as strategic partners.

Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with Prime Minister Meloni during her visit to Japan in May to attend the G7 Hiroshima Summit. The two leaders shared the view to further deepen bilateral cooperation in a wide range of fields, including defense, security, and economic fields. Furthermore, the two leaders welcomed the conclusion of negotiations on the Japan-Italy Film Co-production Agreement, and in June, Foreign Minister Hayashi signed the Agreement with Minister of Culture Gennaro Sangiuliano, who was visiting Japan.

In November, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held an informal talk with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Tajani, who was visiting Japan to attend the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting. The ministers exchanged views on pressing international issues, including the situation in the Middle East, and affirmed that they would carry out the transfer of the G7 Presidency at various levels. In December, during his visit to Dubai, UAE to attend COP28, Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with Prime Minister Meloni, in which they concurred on close bilateral cooperation to continue the discussions of the G7 in 2023 under the upcoming Italian G7 Presidency. Furthermore, in February 2024, Prime Minister Meloni visited Japan



Japan-Italy Summit Meeting (May 18, Hiroshima Prefecture; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

and held a meeting with Prime Minister Kishida. The leaders concurred on close cooperation in a wide range of fields upon discussing bilateral relations, regional affairs, and responses to various issues in the international community, with a view to cooperating for the success of the G7 in 2024 under Italy’s Presidency, and to further promote Japan-Italy relations, which have made dramatic progress in recent years.

(6) Spain

On July 23, parliamentary elections were held for both the Congress of Deputies and Senate, and, as a result, the opposition Popular Party (PP) became the leading party. However, PP leader Alberto Núñez Feijóo did not manage to win the required number of votes in a vote of confidence for prime minister in the Congress of Deputies in September. In October, interim Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez of the ruling Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (PSOE) was nominated as the candidate for the next prime minister. In November, with the support of leftist parties, including regionalist parties in Catalonia and the Basque Country, he was confirmed by the Congress of Deputies and reappointed as prime minister.

In regard to Japan-Spain relations, the two countries are strengthening their cooperation under the strategic partnership, which was upgraded upon concurrence at the summit in 2018. In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi, who was attending the emergency special session on Ukraine of the UN General Assembly in New York, held a meeting with Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares, in which they discussed matters including cooperation to defend the international order based on the rule of law between Japan, which held



Japan-Spain Foreign Ministers' Meeting (February 23, New York, U.S.)

the G7 Presidency and was a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2023, and Spain, which assumed the EU Presidency in the latter half of the year. In addition, there was progress in cooperation between the public and private sectors, including the 23rd Japan-Spain Symposium, which was held in Salamanca, Spain in November.

(7) Poland

General elections were held in October, and although the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party became the leading party in the lower house, it failed to win a majority, and a new coalition government headed by Prime Minister Donald Tusk, leader of the Civic Platform (PO) party, was formed in December.

Poland, as Ukraine's neighbor, actively responds to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, playing a major role as a hub of support for Ukraine. The protracted aggression has increased the burden and vulnerability of Poland, which has accepted many Ukrainian evacuees. In February, Japan decided to provide Official Development Assistance (ODA) directly to Poland in order to alleviate this burden and effectively provide humanitarian, recovery, and reconstruction assistance to Ukraine.

In regard to Japan-Poland relations, there were frequent high-level mutual visits by dignitaries.

In March, Prime Minister Kishida, the first Japanese prime minister to visit Poland in 10 years, held summit meetings respectively with President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, in which he expressed gratitude for Poland's cooperation for his visit to Ukraine, and held candid exchanges of views regarding the situation in Ukraine and ways to further



Japan-Poland Summit Meeting with President Duda (March 22, Warsaw, Poland; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

progress bilateral relations. In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau during his visit to Belgium to attend the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs. In May, Foreign Minister Rau visited Japan (the first such visit by a Polish foreign minister in six years) and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Hayashi. In July, Prime Minister Kishida visited Poland and held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Morawiecki, in which the leaders concurred to further strengthen economic relations and to promote bilateral cooperation on the regional situations in Ukraine and the Indo-Pacific region. Furthermore, in September, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Poland and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Rau for the third time in 2023. In January 2024, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Poland after the new administration was inaugurated. She paid a courtesy call to President Duda and held her first Japan-Poland Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski, in which she confirmed that Japan will continue to strengthen the strategic partnership relationship with the new administration.

(8) Ukraine

Amid the ongoing Russia's aggression against Ukraine that was started in February 2022, a Japan-Ukraine Summit telephone call was held on January 6, 2023, during which Prime Minister Kishida conveyed to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that Japan would play an active role as the G7 Presidency that same year. Furthermore, on February 18, Foreign Minister Hayashi, who was visiting Germany to attend the Munich Security Conference, held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba.



Japan-Ukraine Summit Meeting (March 22, Kyiv, Ukraine; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

On February 24, one year after the start of Russia's aggression, Prime Minister Kishida held the G7 Leaders' Video Conference. The meeting opened with remarks by President Zelenskyy, followed by discussions among the G7 leaders, and the G7 Leaders' Statement was issued after the meeting. In addition, Foreign Minister Hayashi attended the emergency special session on Ukraine of the UN General Assembly (February 23) and the ministerial debate at the UN Security Council (February 24), both held in New York.

On March 21, Prime Minister Kishida visited Ukraine and held a summit meeting with President Zelenskyy. Both leaders concurred to further strengthen cooperation and issued the Joint Statement on Special Global Partnership Between Japan and Ukraine. In addition, on the same day, Prime Minister Kishida visited Bucha City on the outskirts of Kyiv and offered flowers at a memorial for the war dead.

On April 4, Foreign Minister Hayashi, who was visiting Belgium to attend the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs, held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Kuleba. In addition, on May 12, the Preparatory Meeting on the Reconstruction of Ukraine was established with the aim of close cooperation among relevant ministries and agencies on the promotion of reconstruction of Ukraine by the Japanese public and private sectors. There were three such meetings in 2023.

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit held from May 19 to 21, the G7 leaders also discussed the situation in Ukraine and issued the G7 Leaders' Statement on Ukraine. In addition, President Zelenskyy visited Japan from May 20 to 21 and participated in the session on

Ukraine with the G7 leaders, as well as in the session on peace and stability with the G7 leaders and leaders of invited countries (See the Opening Special Feature on page 2 and Chapter 3, Section 3, 3 (1)). Prime Minister Kishida also held a summit meeting with President Zelenskyy and expressed his desire to further expand and deepen cooperation with Ukraine and to exercise leadership as the G7 Presidency based on the outcomes of the G7 Hiroshima Summit and the Japan-Ukraine Summit Meeting. Moreover, President Zelenskyy visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, where he and Prime Minister Kishida laid a wreath at the Cenotaph for the Atomic Bomb Victims.

During the Japan-Ukraine summit telephone call on June 9, Prime Minister Kishida and President Zelenskyy exchanged views on the impact of the collapse of the dam at the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant that occurred the same month. In addition, from June 15 to 20, Deputy Prime Minister for Restoration of Ukraine and Minister for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development of Ukraine Oleksandr Kubrakov visited Japan, attended the G7 Transport Ministers' Meeting in Ise-Shima, Mie, and exchanged views with related parties. On June 21, Foreign Minister Hayashi attended the Ukraine Recovery Conference (London, UK) and paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal.

At the NATO Summit Meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania in July, the Joint Declaration of Support for Ukraine was announced, and the G7 leaders, including Prime Minister Kishida, and President Zelenskyy attended the ceremony to issue the declaration (on October 7, the first round of negotiations on the preparation of the bilateral document between Japan and Ukraine, based on the "Joint Declaration of Support for Ukraine" were held). This was followed by another Japan-Ukraine summit telephone call on August 29.

On September 9, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Ukraine with representatives of Japanese companies, paid courtesy calls to President Zelenskyy and Prime Minister Shmyhal, and held a foreign ministers' meeting. At the courtesy call to President Zelenskyy, Foreign Minister Hayashi stated that he would like to support the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine through public and private sector engagement taking the opportunity that the Japanese company representatives



Foreign Minister Hayashi pays a courtesy call to President Zelenskyy (September 9, Kyiv, Ukraine)



Joint press conference with the foreign ministers of Japan and Ukraine. Due to an air raid warning, the press conference was held in an underground shelter at short notice (January 7, 2024, Kyiv, Ukraine).

are joining this visit with a view to the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction scheduled for the beginning of 2024. During his visit, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Bucha City on the outskirts of Kyiv and attended a ceremony to hand over crane trucks to Ukraine's State Emergency Service. Furthermore, on September 20, during his visit to New York to attend the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Kishida attended the UN Security Council High Level Open Debate on "Upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter through effective multilateralism: maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine" (with Foreign Minister Kamikawa also in attendance), and Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Kuleba. On October 3, Prime Minister Kishida participated in the Summit-Level Teleconference on the situation in Ukraine with other like-minded countries at the invitation of President Joseph Biden of the U.S.

On November 8, during the Japan-Ukraine summit telephone call, Prime Minister Kishida and President Zelenskyy concurred to hold the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction in Tokyo on February 19, 2024. On November 20, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUJI Kiyoto and State Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry IWATA Kazuchika visited Ukraine together with Japanese business representatives and exchanged views mainly on efforts for Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction with Prime Minister Shmyhal and other government officials as well as Ukrainian business representatives, including the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

On December 6, Prime Minister Kishida held the G7 Leaders' Video Conference. The meeting opened with remarks by President Zelenskyy, followed by discussions among the G7 leaders, which reaffirmed the G7's unwavering solidarity with Ukraine, and the G7 leaders concurred to remain united in strongly promoting sanctions against Russia and support for Ukraine.

On January 7, 2024, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Ukraine, paid courtesy calls to President Zelenskyy and Prime Minister Shmyhal, and held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Kuleba. Foreign Minister Kamikawa directly conveyed Japan's steadfast basic stance of standing with Ukraine. In addition, Foreign Minister Kamikawa announced that Japan would contribute approximately 37 million U.S. dollars to NATO's Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP) Trust Fund for Ukraine and provide an unmanned aircraft detection system. She also attended the ceremony for the provision of five mobile gas turbine generators and logistic support for the transport of seven large transformers as winterization assistance. During this visit, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Bucha City and inspected the bridge over the Irpin River near the city. She also visited the facility established by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to provide assistance to women and children at Kyiv Central Railway Station, and exchanged views with people, including representatives of international organizations stationed in Ukraine.

On February 19, 2024, the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction was held in Tokyo with the participation of Prime Minister Shmyhal. At the Leaders'

Session of the Conference, Prime Minister Kishida identified the support for Ukraine as an investment for the future of both countries and the entire world, emphasized that Ukraine's recovery is in the interest of Japan and the international community as a whole, and expressed that Japan would support Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction through both the public and private sectors involvement. As a result of the Conference, 56 cooperation documents from both the public and private sectors were presented. In addition, at the Conference, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Session, during which organic discussions took place between women active in the Government of Ukraine, business, and civil society in order to incorporate women's and children's perspectives into recovery and reconstruction efforts. The meeting provided an opportunity to deliver a strong message to the international community on the need for continued support to Ukraine. On the same day, Prime Minister Shmyhal held a meeting with Prime Minister Kishida, had a dinner meeting with Chief Cabinet Secretary HAYASHI Yoshimasa, and had an informal talk with Foreign Minister Kamikawa. Prime Minister Kishida told Prime Minister Shmyhal that the Conference had achieved remarkable results, including the release of more than 50 cooperation documents from the public and private sectors, and the two leaders concurred to continue to closely follow up the outcomes of Prime Minister Shmyhal's visit to Japan and the Conference. In addition, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Prime Minister Shmyhal also concurred to maintain coordination between the two governments to further strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation in the international arena (See the Special Feature on page 27).

The Government of Japan will continue to impose severe sanctions against Russia and provide strong support to Ukraine in order to stop Russia's aggression as soon as possible and realize a just and lasting peace in Ukraine. Japan will also accelerate public-private sector initiatives for the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine based on the outcomes of the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction.

3 Collaboration with Regional Institutions, and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)

(1) Cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

NATO is an organization that aims at providing collective defense for its member countries. In addition to defense for its member countries, it provides engagement in cooperative security efforts with non-EU countries and organizations and in crisis management outside of the region that could pose a direct threat to the security of the territories and peoples of NATO member countries, including security management and counter-terrorism efforts. In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, in 2022 Finland and Sweden, which had previously maintained a policy of military non-alignment, applied to join NATO, with Finland joining in April 2023 and Sweden joining in March 2024.

With the existing international order under serious challenge, cooperation between Japan and NATO has become even more important based on the recognition that the security of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable. In January, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg visited Japan for the first time in six years. In March, in response to the earthquake damage in southeastern Türkiye, Japan dispatched SDF aircraft to transport emergency relief supplies based on the request from the Government of Türkiye and NATO. This was Japan's first international emergency relief operation conducted in cooperation with NATO. In addition, in March, Japan announced a contribution of 30 million U.S. dollars to NATO's CAP Trust Fund for the provision of nonlethal equipment to assist Ukraine in the face of Russia's aggression. Foreign Minister Hayashi attended the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in April and Prime Minister Kishida attended the NATO Summit Meeting in July, both for the second consecutive year. Prime Minister Kishida met with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg during the Summit Meeting, and the two sides announced agreement on a new cooperation document between Japan and NATO, the Individually Tailored Partnership



Prime Minister Kishida shakes hands with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg. (July 12, Brussels, Belgium; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)



Joint press conference after the Japan-Finland Foreign Ministers' Meeting (January 9, 2024, Helsinki, Finland)

Programme (ITPP) (See the Special Feature on page 142).

(2) Cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

The OSCE is a regional security organization with 57 participating states across Europe, the Central Asia and Caucasus region, and North America, that works to bridge differences between member states and foster trust through conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction in these regions through a comprehensive approach. Japan has cooperated with the OSCE since 1992 as an Asian Partner for Co-operation. Japan provides support to Afghanistan and Central Asian countries to strengthen border controls to prevent terrorism and strengthen the capabilities of customs officials, to strengthen the leadership capacity of women in conflicts in Ukraine and neighboring countries, and to strengthen the capacity

to prevent human trafficking. Furthermore, the OSCE has been playing an important role in improving the situation in Ukraine even before Russia's aggression began in 2022. Japan has been providing financial support and dispatching experts to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) (experts were dispatched intermittently since August 2015, and dispatches ended in February 2022).

Japan has been attending the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings every year. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa participated in the meeting held in December in North Macedonia. At the meeting, he stated that Japan will further strengthen cooperation with the OSCE, which is addressing issues with a comprehensive approach.

(3) Cooperation with the Council of Europe (CoE)

The CoE is an international organization comprising 46 member states in Europe, which has played a key role in establishing international standards in areas concerning democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. As the CoE's sole observer country in Asia since 1996, Japan has contributed to the CoE by providing expertise and supporting the holding of meetings.

At the 4th CoE Summit held in May, Prime Minister Kishida issued a message in which he noted that Japan has deepened its cooperative relations with the CoE, which shares fundamental values and principles. He also welcomed the establishment of an organization to register the damage caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine and stated that Japan will actively participate in future discussions.

(4) Cooperation through the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)

ASEM was established in 1996 as the sole forum for deepening dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe. Its members currently comprise 51 countries and two institutions. It works through summit meetings, ministerial meetings including foreign ministers' meetings, seminars, and other activities focused on three pillars, namely (1) politics, (2) economy, and (3) society and culture.

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) is ASEM's only permanent institution. It is located in Singapore

**SPECIAL
FEATURE****Progress in Japan-NATO Cooperation**

2023 was a year of further progress in cooperative relations between Japan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

In July, Prime Minister Kishida participated in the NATO Summit for the second consecutive year, sending a strong message that the security of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable. At the Summit, he announced the agreement on the Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP), a new programme for Japan-NATO cooperation.

In order to elevate Japan-NATO cooperation to new heights, the ITPP sets 16 specific fields of cooperation, including cyber, strategic communication, and science and technology, under the four priority issues of (1) emerging security issues, (2) longstanding security issues, (3) expansion of cooperative activities, and (4) promotion of fundamental values.

Based on the ITPP, for example, in the cyber area, the first Japan-NATO Cyber Dialogue was held in November, during which both sides exchanged views on their cyber policies and cooperation in the cyber area. In the same month, the NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme “Information Day” was held to promote cooperation between Japan and NATO in science and technology. In addition, practical cooperation continues to be implemented, such as the dispatch of female Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) officers to the NATO headquarters and mutual participation as an observer in various exercises and trainings.

In order to respond to the ever-changing international security environment and to maintain and strengthen the international order based on the rule of law, Japan will steadily strengthen its strategic cooperation with NATO, a partner with which Japan shares fundamental values and strategic interests.



Prime Minister Kishida attending the NATO Summit Partner Session (July 12, Vilnius, Lithuania; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

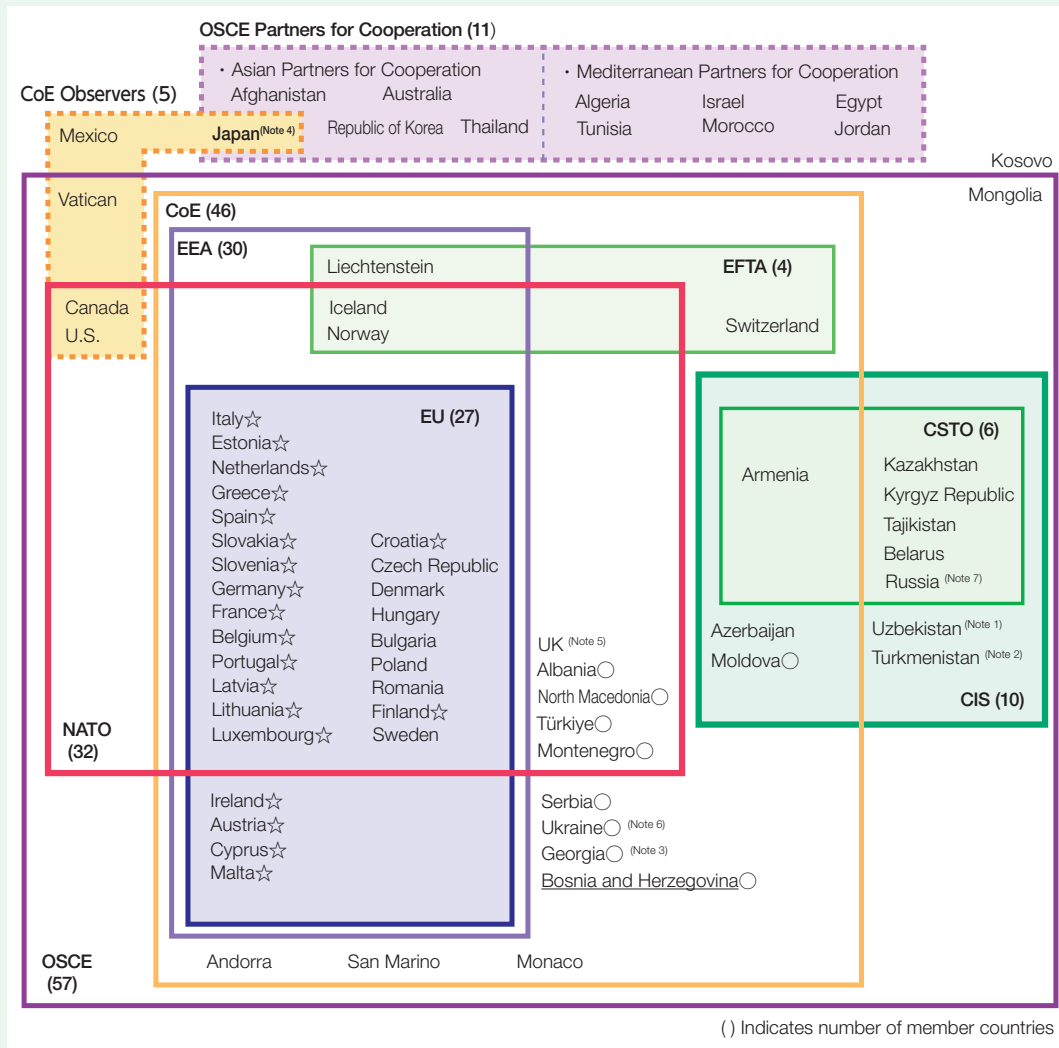
and is responsible for activities in the field of society and culture, one of the three pillars.

Japan has supported the ASEF with its project stockpiling medical personal protective equipment (PPE) and antiviral drugs to combat infectious diseases, and cooperated in the emergency transportation of stockpiled supplies to ASEM partners and the implementation of capacity building workshops for emergency response and public health network projects. As part of these efforts, Japan and the ASEF jointly held a high-level conference on “Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in an Era of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and Pandemics” in Tokyo in February. In addition, in June, “Pandemic and the Economy 2023: A Pandemic-Resilient Society” was held in Finland. Under the

ASEF’s Project for Strengthening Preparedness and Response to COVID-19 and other Emerging Infectious Diseases, financially contributed to by Japan, drugs, PPE, medical devices and other items to combat infectious diseases were provided through the World Health Organization (WHO) to Ukraine and its neighboring countries accepting Ukrainian displaced persons (ASEM partners: Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Bulgaria; non-ASEM partner: Moldova).

In addition, Japan contributed to ASEM’s activities including through the implementation of ASEF Classroom Network online projects as a co-host, and its financial contributions to the ASEF.

Major Frameworks of Europe



<Legend>

○: Candidate to be an EU member (9)

☆: Euro member states (20)

—: Member countries of the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) (1)

(Note 1) Uzbekistan ceased its membership in the CSTO in 2012.

(Note 2) Turkmenistan has been an associate member of the CIS since 2005.

(Note 3) Georgia notified the CIS of its decision to leave the organization in August 2008. It formally withdrew from the CIS in August 2009. It was granted candidate status for EU membership in December 2023.

(Note 4) Japan is a partner country of NATO.

(Note 5) The UK withdrew from the EU on January 31, 2020.

(Note 6) Ukraine signed a presidential decree in April 2018 to withdraw from the CIS.

(Note 7) Russia was excluded from the CoE in March 2022.

<Abbreviations>

CoE (Council of Europe): (46)

CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States): (10)

CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization): (6)

EEA (European Economic Area): (30)

EFTA (European Free Trade Association): (4)

EU (European Union): (27)

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization): (32)

OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe): (57)

Other European Regions

Nordic countries

Iceland: In November, Foreign Minister Kamikawa participated in the Reykjavik Global Forum 2023 hosted by Women Political Leaders (WPL),⁵ the Government of Iceland, and the Parliament of Iceland via video message.

Sweden: In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi held an informal talk with Foreign Minister Tobias Billström during the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Belgium, and in May, he visited Sweden to attend the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum co-hosted by the EU and Sweden, where he also met with Foreign Minister Billström. In addition, in June, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Minister for Defense Pål Jonson, who was visiting Japan. In July, Prime Minister Kishida, who was visiting Lithuania to attend the NATO Summit Meeting, held his first summit meeting with Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, during which they concurred to further strengthen bilateral security cooperation. In January 2024, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Sweden and held a Japan-Sweden Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

Denmark: In October, Prime Minister Kishida held his first summit meeting with Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, who was visiting Japan. The two leaders issued the Joint Leaders' Statement on the Deepening of the Strategic Partnership between Japan and the Kingdom of Denmark as well as the Joint Strategic Work Program.

Norway: In December, Prime Minister Kishida held his first summit meeting with Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, who was visiting Japan, and the two leaders issued the Joint Statement on the Strategic Partnership between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway.

Finland: In April, Finland joined NATO during the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Belgium. In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Sweden to attend the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Meeting co-hosted by the EU and Sweden, and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto. In August, the Japan-Finland Working Holiday Agreement entered into force. In January 2024, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Finland and held a Japan-Finland Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

Benelux countries

The Netherlands: In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wopke Hoekstra during the emergency special session of the UN General Assembly held in New York. Furthermore, in September, Prime Minister Kishida held his first summit meeting with Prime Minister Mark Rutte during the G20 Summit in New Delhi, in which the two leaders confirmed the strengthening of cooperation in fields including security. In October, the Japan-Netherlands Peace Exchange Programme was held. In January 2024, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited the Netherlands, paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister Rutte, and held a Japan-Netherlands Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

Belgium: In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Belgium to attend the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Hadja Lahbib. In addition, in July, Prime Minister Kishida visited Belgium to attend the Japan-EU Summit Meeting. He held his first summit meeting with Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, during which he confirmed that the two countries will closely cooperate to strengthen bilateral relations and address various international issues.

Luxembourg: In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs and Europe Jean Asselborn during the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Belgium.

Baltic countries

Estonia: In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu during the Munich Security Conference held in Germany.

Latvia: In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs during his visit to Germany to attend the Munich Security Conference. In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Rinkēvičs during his visit to Sweden to attend the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum co-hosted by the EU and Sweden. In August, the Japan-Latvia Working Holiday Agreement entered into force.

Lithuania: In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis during his visit to Germany to attend the Munich Security Conference. In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Landsbergis when he visited Japan to attend the Munich Leaders Meeting. In July, Prime Minister Kishida visited Lithuania to attend the NATO Summit Meeting and held meetings with Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė and President Gitanas Nausėda. In addition, during this time, Prime Minister Kishida held an informal talk with the prime ministers of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, in which the leaders concurred to strengthen cooperation between Japan and the three Baltic countries.

⁵ WPL is an international network of women politicians and an organization working to increase the number and influence of women political leaders. It was founded in 2013 by former European Parliament Vice President Silvana Koch-Mehrin. Foreign Minister Kamikawa has been a WPL Ambassador since 2016.

Ireland: In June, Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence Micheál Martin during the Ukraine Reconstruction Conference held in the UK.

Andorra: In May, a cabinet shuffle took place and Foreign Minister Imma Tor Faus remained in office. In November, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa paid a courtesy call to Foreign Minister Faus during the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting.

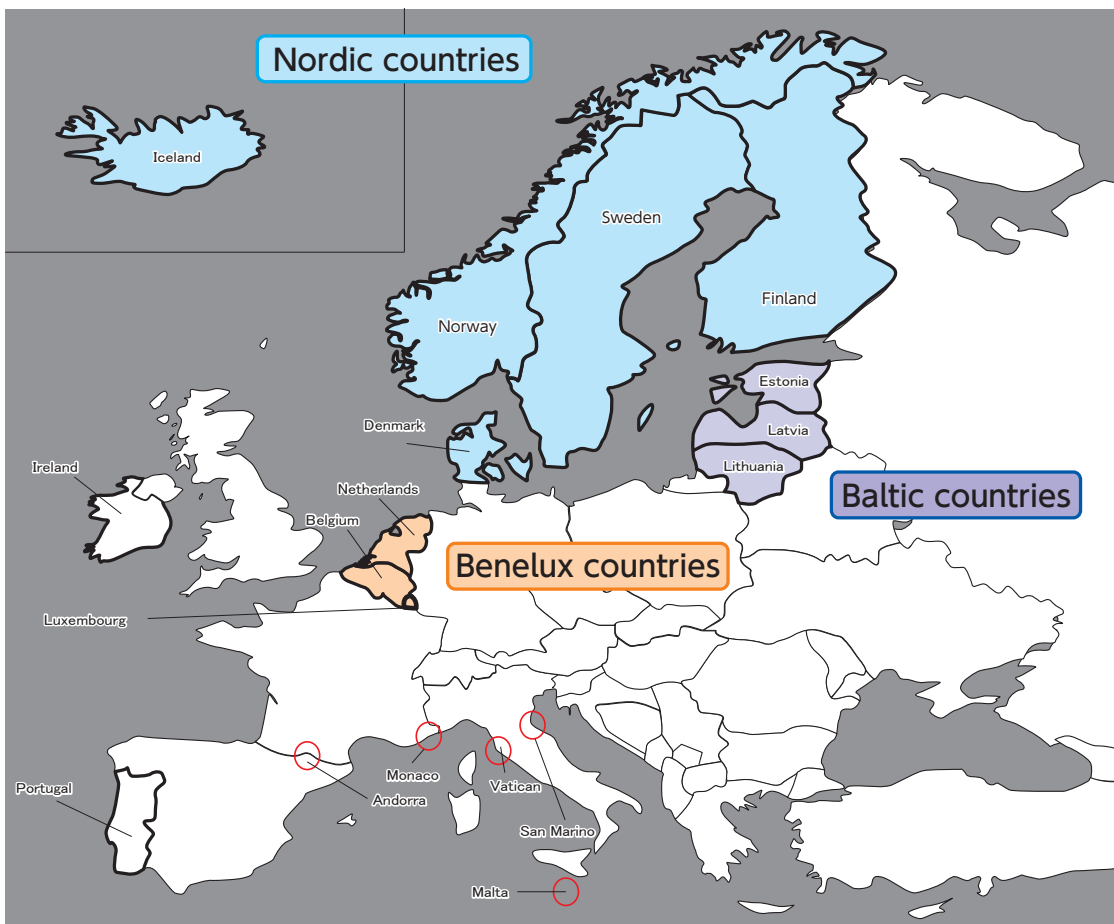
San Marino: As heads of state of San Marino, Captains Regent Alessandro Scarano and Adele Tonnini took office in April, followed by Captains Regent Filippo Tamagnini and Gaetano Troina in October.

The Vatican: In January, during his visit to Italy, Prime Minister Kishida offered condolences and flowers for the death of His Holiness Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI at the end of December 2022.

Portugal: In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister João Gomes Cravinho during the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Belgium. In September, Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Foreign Minister Cravinho during the UN General Assembly in New York.

Malta: In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade Ian Borg during the emergency special session on Ukraine of the UN General Assembly in New York. In October, Malta held the third national security advisors' meeting on Ukraine, which was attended by National Security Advisor Akiba. On January 1, 2024, the Embassy of Japan in Malta was opened, which is expected to create an environment for building even closer relations and promoting cooperation between Japan and Malta (See the Column on page 150).

Monaco: In August, a delegation of Diet members led by Member of the House of Representatives and Diet Affairs Committee Chairman TAKAGI Tsuyoshi visited Monaco and paid a courtesy call to Minister of State Pierre Dartout.



[V4]

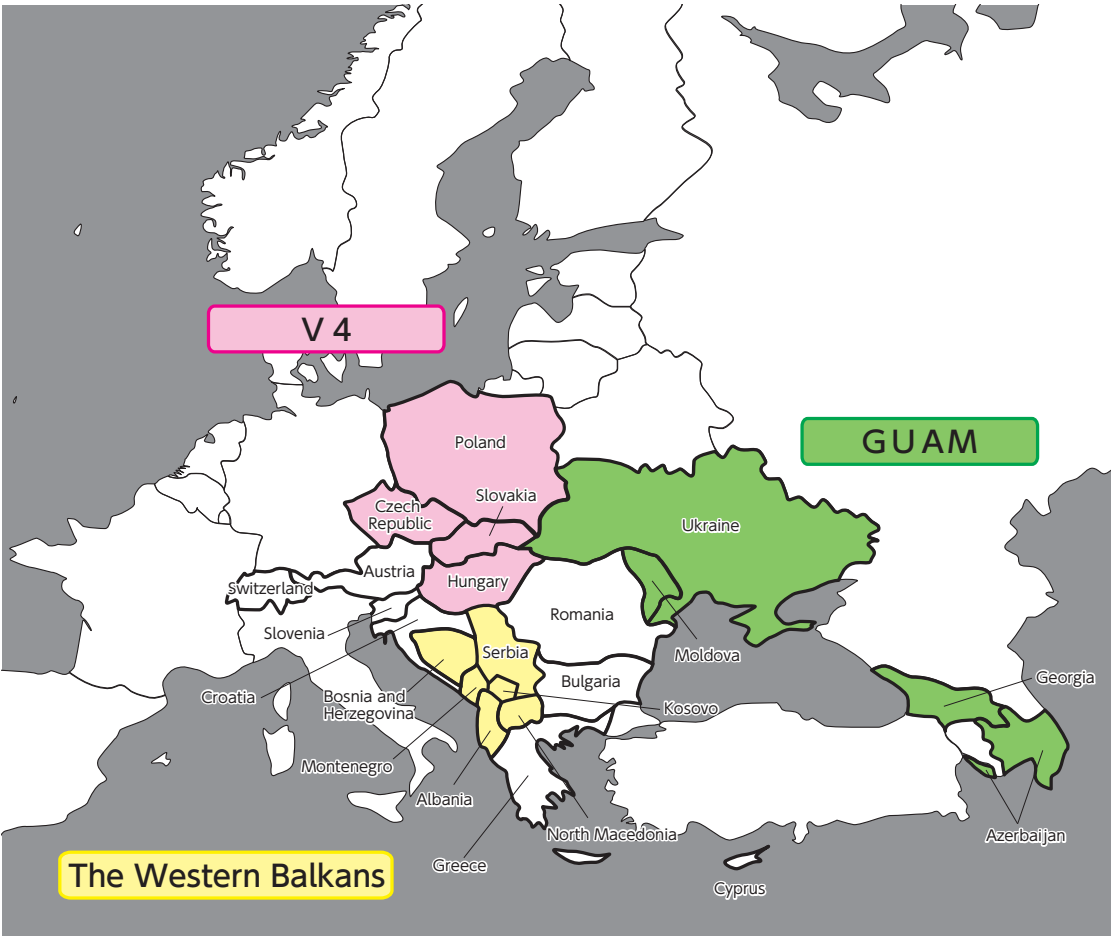
Bilateral relations between Japan and the V4 countries of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary have a long history and are traditionally friendly. Cooperation with the V4, which are neighboring countries of Ukraine and share fundamental values and principles such as freedom, democracy, rule of law, and human rights, is important. The 12th “V4+Japan” policy dialogue was held in March, where the countries reaffirmed strengthening cooperation in a wide range of fields.

Slovakia (V4 chair until June): The 30th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-Slovakia diplomatic relations was marked by increased exchanges at various levels, including the foreign ministers’ meeting between Foreign Minister Hayashi and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Rastislav Káčer in New York in February, and the meeting between State Minister for Foreign Affairs YAMADA Kenji and State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs Ingrid Brocková, who visited Japan in May.

Czech Republic (V4 chair from July): In July, Prime Minister Kishida held a summit meeting with President Petr Pavel in Lithuania, and the leaders concurred to promote cooperation not only in regional affairs but also in the economic security field. In addition, a delegation of Chamber of Deputies diplomatic members (April), Deputy Prime Minister for Digitisation Ivan Bartoš (June), Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health Vlastimil Válek (October), and Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security of the Senate Chairperson Pavel Fischer (October) visited Japan, strengthening intergovernmental and legislative ties in the 30th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-Czech Republic diplomatic relations.

Poland: See 2 (7) Poland

Hungary: In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a foreign ministers’ meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó in New York. In July, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Szijjártó visited Japan and held a foreign ministers’ meeting with Foreign Minister Hayashi.



The Western Balkans

In the Western Balkans region, despite ongoing concerns about peace implementation and ethnic conflicts, including the intensification of separatist actions by the Republika Srpska, one of the two entities that make up Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the stalled dialogue aimed at normalizing relations between Serbia and Kosovo, countries in the region have made overall progress toward stability and development as they undertake reforms aimed at joining the EU. As part of the “Western Balkans Cooperation Initiative,”⁶ in November, as a collaborative project with the Western Balkan Fund established by the governments of the Western Balkans, Japan held an inter-regional conference on the theme of responding to disinformation with participants from each West Balkan country. Moreover, youth exchange was held under the theme of peacebuilding as a cooperation project with the Western Balkans Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO).

Active high-level dialogue was also realized under the same initiative. In February, Prime Minister Kishida met with Prime Minister Edi Rama of Albania during his visit to Japan. The two leaders concurred on the importance of addressing Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the need to respond to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in the East and South China Seas, and shared serious concerns over North Korea's increasing nuclear and missile activities. They also concurred to further strengthen cooperation in the international arena, including the UN, taking into account that both Japan and Albania are non-permanent members of the UN Security Council. In addition, in December, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa, during his visit to North Macedonia to attend the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting, held a meeting with Foreign Minister Bujar Osmani.

Slovenia: In September, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Tanja Fajon during her visit to the U.S. to attend the UN General Assembly High-Level Week.

Romania: In March, Prime Minister Kishida met with President Klaus-Werner Iohannis and Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu during their visit to Japan, upgrading Japan-Romania bilateral relations to a strategic partnership (See the Column on page 148). In June, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs YOSHIKAWA Yuumi visited Romania and attended the opening ceremony of the Braila Bridge, which was constructed with Japanese technology. In September, Prime Minister Kishida participated via video message in the Three Seas Summit held in Bucharest. In October, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji visited Romania and paid courtesy calls to Presidential Advisor Bogdan Lucian Aurescu and Foreign Minister Luminita Odobescu.

Bulgaria: In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Nikolay Milkov in Belgium.

Croatia: In celebration of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-Croatia diplomatic relations in 2023, Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Gordan Grlic-Radman in New York in February and in Tokyo in July. During the foreign ministers' meeting in July, the Japan-Croatia Air Services Agreement was signed. In addition, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshikawa visited Croatia in July, and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji visited Croatia in October.

Austria: In May, an agreement in principle was reached for the Agreement between Japan and the Republic of Austria on Social Security, which had been the subject of intergovernmental negotiations. Foreign Minister Hayashi also held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister for European and International Affairs Alexander Schallenberg in the same month. In addition, in November, the 25th meeting of the Japan-Austria Committee for Issues of the Future was held in Kofu City, Yamanashi Prefecture, on the theme of efforts toward a decarbonized society in both countries.

Liechtenstein: In June, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a foreign ministers' meeting in the UK with Minister of Foreign Affairs, Education and Sport Dominique Hasler, the first-ever Japan-Liechtenstein Foreign Ministers' Meeting since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1996.

Switzerland: In July, the governments of Japan and Switzerland held the fifth meeting of the Joint Committee and the third meeting of the Sub-Committee on Rules of Origin, Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation established under the Free Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (FTEPA) between Japan and Switzerland. In November, there was an announcement of the logo commemorating the 160th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Switzerland in 2024.

Greece: In January, Prime Minister Kishida held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who was on an official working visit to Japan. The two leaders issued the Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Hellenic Republic. In November, the Tax Convention between Japan and the Hellenic Republic was signed.

Cyprus: In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Constantinos Kombos during the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum, jointly held by the EU and Sweden, in Stockholm.

Moldova: Japan maintained close relations with Moldova, which is in a difficult situation due to Russia's aggression. In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a telephone call with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration Nicu Popescu. In October, Foreign Minister Kamikawa participated via video message in the 4th Ministerial Conference of the Moldova Support Platform held in Chişinău, the capital of Moldova, expressing continued support for Moldova as it is affected by Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

⁶ In January 2018, Prime Minister Abe became the first Japanese prime minister to visit Serbia, where he announced the “Western Balkans Cooperation Initiative” to advance cooperation with the Western Balkan countries (Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro) on their path to join the EU, and promoted cooperation with the entire Western Balkan region in areas such as youth exchanges and economic exchanges.

COLUMN

Deepening Japan-Romania Relations: Upgrading Relations to the Status of Strategic Partners

● Romania: A Latin Country in Eastern Europe

Romania is located in southeastern Europe, with a land area roughly the size of Japan's *Honshu* Island and a population of about 19.05 million, the sixth largest among the 27 countries of the European Union (EU). With Romanian roots in the indigenous Dacians and Romans, the country is also known as the "Latin island in the Slavic sea." Since joining the EU in 2007, Romania's economy has been steadily growing, achieving 4.8% growth in 2022 against the backdrop of 10.69 billion euros in foreign investment, the highest amount ever. Romania is also a friendly country to Japan in Eastern Europe with the second largest number of Japanese language learners after Poland.

Romania borders Ukraine, and its government and citizens have taken the initiative in assisting many displaced persons since Russia's aggression against Ukraine launched. Romania's support for Ukraine is reminiscent of its support for Japan at the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake, when it accepted students from Fukushima University and held an exhibition of paintings by children from Fukushima.

● History of Japan-Romania Exchanges

Japan-Romania relations date back to the establishment of Romania's legation in Tokyo in 1921. Diplomatic relations were severed in 1944 but resumed in 1959. Prime Minister Abe became the first Japanese Prime Minister to visit Romania in 2018, and the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Romania was celebrated in 2021. While struggling with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Japan widely introduced Japanese culture to Romania, such as through online performances of *Awa Ningyo Joruri* puppet theater and participating in "Bookfest," Romania's largest book festival. In addition, Romania issued a commemorative coin from its central bank, and the Radu Stanca National Theater Sibiu held a performance in Japan. Through such festive events, bilateral exchanges were further deepened.

● Signing of the Joint Statement on the Establishment of the Strategic Partnership

In March 2023, President Klaus-Werner Iohannis visited Japan and signed the "Joint Statement on the Establishment of the Strategic Partnership between Japan and Romania" with Prime Minister Kishida, upgrading bilateral relations to a strategic partnership.

In light of this, in the areas of diplomacy and security, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs YOSHIKAWA Yuumi (July), Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Defense ONODA Kimi (August), and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUJI Kiyoto (October) visited Romania in succession. In July, a defense attaché was assigned to the Embassy of Japan in Romania for the first time in 22 years.

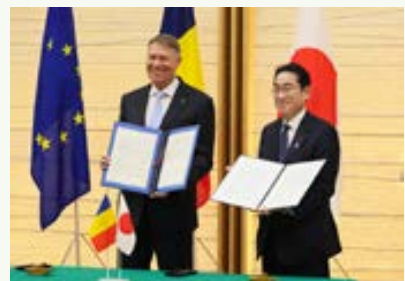
On the economic front, in May, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry NISHIMURA Yasutoshi became the first Japanese Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry to visit Romania, and signed the "Joint Statement on economic cooperation." In June, the "Romanian-Japanese Innovation Forum" was held with themes including start-ups, 5G, and smart cities. In July, a ceremony was held to mark the completion of the Braila Bridge, the third longest suspension bridge in the EU, over the



Logo for the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Romania



Commemorative coin issued by Romania's central bank to mark the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations (one side features a Japanese design and the other has a Romanian design)



Prime Minister Kishida and President Iohannis signing the Joint Statement on the Establishment of the Strategic Partnership between Japan and Romania (March 7, Tokyo; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

Danube River. Built with Japanese technology, the Braila Bridge is a successful example of project cooperation in line with the “Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure between Japan and the European Union.”

In terms of culture, various events were held, including the “Hanami” cherry blossom viewing event in the Japanese Garden in Bucharest (April); the “I Love Sushi” exhibition (May-June); various cooperation activities with the Sibiu International Theater Festival, one of the three major theater festivals in Europe (June); the Japan festival at the Comic Con in Bucharest, the largest pop culture convention in Eastern Europe (September); the Japanese Film Festival in Timișoara, which was selected as one of the 2023 European Capitals of Culture (November); and the *Tenjin Matsuri* performance at the National Theatre of Bucharest (November).

Japan will continue to further deepen Japan-Romania relations, which have made great strides through the strategic partnership.

COLUMN

Establishment of the Embassy of Japan in Malta

Malta is located in the center of the Mediterranean Sea. It was occupied by Napoleon's forces at the end of the 18th century and became a British territory in the early 19th century, but gained independence in 1964 and established diplomatic relations with Japan the following year in 1965. Malta is familiar to those in the know as Japan's largest source for imported bluefin tuna. The Embassy of Japan in Malta was established in January 2024. With this establishment, Japan now has diplomatic bases in all 27 member states of the European Union (EU).

Japan-Malta exchanges have been strengthened since Prime Minister Abe became the first Japanese Prime Minister to visit Malta in 2017. Prime Minister Joseph Muscat visited Japan in 2018, and President George Vella attended the Ceremony of the Enthronement of His Majesty the Emperor in 2019. The Embassy of Malta in Japan opened in 2020, and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade Ian Borg visited Japan to attend the state funeral for the late Prime Minister ABE Shinzo. In this way, bilateral exchanges have rapidly increased in recent years.

Malta is an important maritime state that leads the world in maritime issues, and is committed to ensuring peace and security in the Mediterranean Sea. Its importance has been particularly growing in recent years for Japan, which is working to realize a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" based on the rule of law. In addition, Malta has been serving with Japan as a non-permanent member of the United Nations (UN) Security Council from 2023 to 2024. At the Japan-Malta Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in February 2023 in New York, the United States, the two foreign ministers concurred to further strengthen cooperation between the two countries as partners who share values and principles.

By establishing a diplomatic base in Malta, which is becoming increasingly important as described above, and by holding constant exchanges of views with stakeholders there in various fields, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will promote understanding on Japan in Malta as well as discussions on further bilateral cooperation going forward.

Furthermore, Valletta, Malta's capital city, which was built in the 16th century and is entirely registered as a World Cultural Heritage Site, is a popular tourist destination. The number of Japanese tourists visiting the city surged from 8,500 to 22,000 between 2015 and 2019 before the spread of COVID-19. With English and Maltese being the official languages of Malta, the number of Japanese students studying English in the country has also increased rapidly, reaching approximately 3,000 by 2022. Thus, there is dramatically increasing need for consular services for Japanese residents and tourists in Malta.

Until now, consular services had been provided by officials of the Embassy of Japan in Italy to Japanese residents in Malta who regularly traveled to Malta, but in urgent cases, consular services could only be received by visiting the Embassy in Italy. With the opening of the Embassy of Japan in Malta, consular services are now available at the Embassy there. In addition, Japanese residents in Malta will be able to receive assistance more quickly in the event of an incident or accident in Malta.

Moreover, Japan expects that public relations, cultural exchanges, and other such activities in Malta will be more active than before, with the Embassy of Japan in Malta as their hub. In light of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Malta in 2025, the opening of this embassy will yield the greatest effect of public relations and promotion of understanding on Japan through the deepening of cooperation with local cultural organizations and the continuous implementation of programs that introduce Japanese culture and promotion of Japanese language education.

Japan looks forward to further deepening Japan-Malta cooperation in a variety of fields, with the Embassy of Japan in Malta as the hub.



The opening ceremony held to commemorate the establishment of the Embassy of Japan in Malta (February 26, 2024, Malta)

6

Russia and Belarus, Central Asia and the Caucasus

2

1 Overview

Despite continued severe sanctions against Russia and strong support for Ukraine, mainly by the G7 and the European Union (EU) countries, Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which is an outrageous act, did not stop in 2023. In this context, there have been almost no high-level exchanges between the G7, EU countries, and Russia. Europe, which before Russia's aggression was the largest importer of Russian energy, has further reduced its imports. In addition, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) continues to further expand, with Finland joining NATO and Sweden making significant progress toward NATO membership. Meanwhile, the decision was made to begin negotiations toward Ukraine's accession to the EU. Thus, the relationship between Russia and the G7, EU countries and others has undergone a major structural change.

Russia insists that it is not isolated from the international community and seeks to further strengthen ties with China, India, North Korea, and the developing and emerging countries known as the Global South, but the responses of these countries and regions have been mixed. At the second Russia-Africa Summit in July, the number of countries whose heads of state attended was significantly lower than the first summit in 2019. For the BRICS summit held in South Africa in August, six new countries were invited to join, and Russia, the 2024 chair, announced that five of them (the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Saudi Arabia) had joined on January 1, 2024. Their future responses will be closely watched.

As for Belarus, President Alexander Lukashenko has maintained his support for Russia, making note of the deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus.

Regarding Central Asian and Caucasus countries, while they have close geopolitical and economic ties with Russia, they have maintained a neutral stance

toward Russia's aggression against Ukraine (excluding Georgia, which has expressed support for Ukraine). They are also struggling to cope with the impact on transportation routes for energy and other trade items and remittances from migrant workers in Russia.

In response to this situation, countries including the U.S. and China held summit- and ministerial-level meetings with the five Central Asian countries, and dialogues with Central Asia were actively pursued. In the Caucasus region, military activity by Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh in September was followed by confidence-building steps toward a peace agreement. With these developments, the international community's attention has turned to the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

2 Russia and Belarus

(1) Situation in Russia

A Internal Situation in Russia

As Russia's aggression against Ukraine became more protracted, the Russian government brought forward a narrative as if the "special military operation" (aggression against Ukraine) was a "homeland defense war" against the West, appealing to its people for their support and patriotism for the war. In Russia, the introduction of a patriotic curriculum into school education continued from the previous year, and the use of new history textbooks that include descriptions of the "special military operation" also began. At the same time, restrictions on freedom of speech and press have been further tightened, and anti-war movements and protests continue to be contained.

The Russian government has offered a series of preferential measures to support participants in the "special military operation," and their families, including the creation of a fund, special treatment in higher education and employment, and other benefits. The Russian

government has also repeatedly stated that there is no need for further mobilization at this stage, claiming that the number of contract soldiers and other applicants is increasing.

As part of further “Russification” efforts, President Putin himself visited the areas of Ukraine illegally “annexed” by Russia to publicize the progress of reconstruction, and “local assembly elections” were held in these areas in conjunction with Russia’s nationwide local elections.

In May, a drone attack on the Kremlin was announced, and frequent drone flights against the city of Moscow and Moscow Oblast were observed, especially during the summer. In June, fighters from the private military company “Wagner,” which had reportedly been at odds with the Russian armed forces and the Ministry of Defense, came within 200 km of Moscow on what they called a “march of justice” (In August, an airplane reportedly carrying “Wagner” leader Yevgeny Prigozhin and some of its leaders crashed, killing all aboard.). However, these incidents did not appear to directly destabilize the domestic situation in Russia.

In December, President Putin announced his candidacy for the 2024 presidential election while maintaining an approval rating of over 80%.

B Russian Foreign Policy

In order to stop Russia’s aggression as soon as possible, Western countries are continuing to make efforts that include support for Ukraine as well as severe sanctions against Russia. Meanwhile, Russia continued its “special military operation” in Ukraine and developed its own narrative blaming the West for international energy and food price hikes. The country’s high-level dialogue with the West remains extremely limited, including the suspension of summit-level dialogues between Russia and Germany and between Russia and France that were held on a limited scale in 2022. Furthermore, Finland’s accession to NATO has been completed, progress has been made in Sweden’s accession to NATO, and the EU has decided to begin negotiations for Ukraine’s accession to the EU, which have resulted in significant structural changes in Russia’s relations with the West.

President Putin has also been withdrawing from international arms control and disarmament frameworks one after another, signing a law suspending the

implementation of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) between the U.S. and Russia in February, a law suspending participation in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) in May (the Russian Foreign Ministry announced in November that the withdrawal procedure was completed), and a law to revoke the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in November. At the same time, the transfer of tactical nuclear weapons by Russia to Belarus has been reported since the spring.

In March, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued warrants of arrest for individuals including President Putin on the grounds that there was sufficient evidence proving their criminal responsibility for the deportation of children from Ukraine.

Against this backdrop, Russia is seeking to strengthen its ties with China, India, North Korea, and developing and emerging countries known as the Global South.

Russia has made particular progress in its relationship with China in various political, economic, and military fields. In March, President Xi Jinping visited Russia on the first foreign trip of his third term and stated that the development of China-Russia relations is a “strategic choice” for China. In October, President Putin visited China to attend the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, and the second face-to-face China-Russia Summit Meeting of 2023 took place. Total trade between China and Russia reached the nations’ 200 billion U.S. dollars goal for 2024 in 2023, ahead of schedule. On the military front, Russia has made moves to strengthen ties with China, with its conducting military joint navigation with Chinese naval vessels (July to August) and joint flights with bombers (June and December) in the vicinity of Japan. The joint statement at the China-Russia Summit Meeting in March also stated that “joint maritime and air patrols and joint exercises will be conducted regularly” and that “mutual trust between the militaries of the two countries will be deepened.” The fact that the militaries of China and Russia continue to engage in joint activities with increasing frequency in the vicinity of Japan should be closely monitored with serious concern from the perspective of Japan’s security.

In September, North Korea’s President of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong Un visited Russia’s Far

East region for the first summit meeting held in four years. In addition, mutual visits by the foreign ministers of the two “countries,” as well as the transfer of arms from North Korea to Russia were conducted among other moves to strengthen relations with North Korea. The government of Japan has strongly condemned Russia’s procurement of arms from North Korea, urges North Korea and Russia to fully implement United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions, and is closely following Russia’s possible military support to North Korea with concern, as it may lead to further deterioration of the situation in Ukraine and constitutes a violation of relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs) prohibiting the transfer and procurement of all arms and related materiel to and from North Korea.

Russia continued to utilize the regional frameworks in which it participates, hosting the second Russia-Africa Summit in July (St. Petersburg, Russia), which was last held in 2019, as well as the BRICS Summit and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Heads of State Council Meeting.

Russia continues to emphasize relations with Belarus and the Central Asian and Caucasian countries, but there has been some friction in relations with Armenia because of handling of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.¹

In March, Russia revised the “Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation”, which outlines its foreign policy.

C Russian Economy

Russia continues its aggression against Ukraine, and has significantly increased defense spending to continue the war. The 2024 budget includes defense spending 1.7 times higher than the previous year (6% of GDP) and a roughly 20% increase in social policy spending, including benefits for soldiers and their families.

Real GDP growth in 2022 fell by 1.2% due to severe sanctions against Russia by the G7 and the EU. However, the government’s fiscal stimulus measures and the resulting recovery in domestic consumption and improved production, especially in the manufacturing sector, have stimulated economic growth, and real GDP growth turned positive in the April-June period

of 2023. Instead of a sharp decline in energy and other exports to Europe due to the sanctions, Russia is trying to shift eastward by increasing exports to countries that are not imposing sanctions against them such as China, India, and Türkiye. In addition, Russia is attempting to reduce dependence on the dollar by increasing the use of the yuan in trade settlements. In response to restrictions on exports of advanced components and other products from Western countries, the Russian economy is dealing with sanctions by attempting to reroute imports through friendly countries.

Meanwhile, there could be medium- to long-term effects on the economy and society due to continued inflationary pressures, policy interest rate hikes (the Russian Central Bank raised its policy interest rate sequentially from 7.5% to 16% between July and December), labor shortages due to partial mobilization for the “special military operation” against Ukraine and the exodus of the working population, and restrictions on access to advanced technology due to sanctions, and others.

(2) Japan-Russia Relations

A Overview of Japan-Russia Relations

Russia’s aggression against Ukraine that began in February 2022 continues to have a serious impact on Japan-Russia relations. In order to stop Russia’s aggression as soon as possible, Japan, in cooperation with the international community including the G7, has been taking measures such as imposing severe sanctions against Russia. One such measure in 2023, when Japan held the G7 Presidency, was Japan’s leading of a united G7 response at the G7 Summits and Foreign Ministers’ Meetings to impose severe sanctions against Russia and strongly support Ukraine. At the same time, Japan has been appropriately dealing with issues that need to be addressed by Japan and Russia as neighbors, such as those related to fishing and other economic activities as well as maritime safety, from the perspective of what is in Japan’s national interest in the overall diplomacy of our country.

In June, a bill was passed in Russia to rename September 3 from “Day of the End of World War II” to “Day of Victory over Militaristic Japan and the End

¹ Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: A dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian settlement on Azerbaijani territory.

of World War II.” In response, the Government of Japan conveyed its position and has been requesting the Russian government to respond appropriately so as not to incite unnecessary emotional conflict between the two peoples.

On the subject of cultural and personal exchange, Japan is conducting projects within an appropriate scope that includes accepting Russian students by the Japanese Government (MEXT) Scholarship and providing Japanese language education in Russia based on the belief that it is important to maintain contact with Russian civil society, especially the younger generation, and to provide Russian citizens with opportunities to gain international perspectives.

With regard to fisheries, the Government of Japan has been holding consultations with Russia to maintain and secure Japan’s interests in fisheries activities since Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. However, in January, Russia informed Japan that it could not arrange the timing of intergovernmental consultations based on the Framework Agreement Concerning Operations in the Waters Around the Four Northern Islands² because of Japan’s policy toward Russia regarding the situation in Ukraine. In response, the Government of Japan has protested and engaged in various communications with the Russian side to enable operations under the agreement, but at this point, no positive response has been received from the Russian side toward the implementation of the operations.

B The Northern Territories and Negotiations on a Peace Treaty

The greatest concern between Japan and Russia is the Northern Territories issue. The Northern Territories are islands over which Japan has sovereignty. The islands are an inherent territory of Japan but currently illegally occupied by Russia. The Northern Territories issue is yet to be resolved even after 78 years have passed since the end of World War II, and the Government of Japan firmly worked on the negotiations under the policy of concluding a peace treaty through the resolution of the territorial issue.³

However, in March 2022, the Government of Russia, considering the measures taken by Japan in relation to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, announced measures such as discontinuing negotiations on a peace treaty, suspending free visits and the Four-Island exchange program, and withdrawing from the dialogue on joint economic activities on the Four Northern Islands. In September, the Government of Russia also announced a government decree suspending the validity of the agreement on free visits and the Four-Island exchange program.

The current situation is entirely the result of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, and Russia’s attempt to shift responsibility to Japan is extremely unjust and absolutely unacceptable, and the government has lodged a strong protest against the Russian side.

Although Japan-Russia relations are in a difficult situation due to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, the government will firmly maintain its policy of concluding a peace treaty through the resolution of the territorial issue.

In addition, the Four-Island exchange program⁴ and other programs have not been conducted since 2020 due to the impact of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the deterioration of Japan-Russia relations following Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. The resumption of exchange and other programs involving the Four Islands, including visits to the graves in the Northern Territories, is one of the highest priorities in Japan-Russia relations. With a strong desire to somehow respond to the fervent pleas of the elderly former residents of the islands, the government will continue to strongly urge the Russian side to resume these programs, with particular emphasis now on the visits to the graves in the Northern Territories.

Japan has also lodged protests against Russia over Russia’s moves to build up its military forces in the Four Northern Islands, including military exercises, on the grounds that such moves are contradictory to Japan’s position regarding these islands.

² Agreement on the Operation of Japanese Fishing Vessels in the Waters Surrounding the Northern Territories.

³ Refer to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website for the position of the Government of Japan on the Northern Territories issue: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/russia/territory/index.html>

⁴ Refers to Visits to Graves in the Northern Territories, free visits, and exchange visits/receptions to the Four Northern Islands (including receiving patients and expert exchanges).



C Japan-Russia Economic Relations

Since Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Japan has continued its policy of suspending, for the time being, government projects related to economic cooperation with Russia while imposing severe sanctions against the country.

Against this backdrop, trade between Japan and Russia in 2023 declined by 44.3% from the previous year (Japan's total trade during the same period was approximately 1,435.9 billion Japanese yen). Due in part to Japan's sanctions against Russia, exports from Russia to Japan fell 47.2% from the previous year (especially crude oil and coal), and exports from Japan to Russia also fell 34.5% from the previous year (all sources: Trade Statistics, Ministry of Finance).

With regard to sanctions against Russia, Japan, in cooperation with the G7 and the rest of the international community, has maintained and strengthened severe sanctions against Russia in order to demonstrate that outrageous acts that shake the very foundation of the international order come with a high price. These include sanctions against individuals such as Russian government and military officials, as well as organizations in Russia and occupied territories, along with sanctions in the financial sector that include freezing bank assets, and measures prohibiting imports and exports. The G7 and Australia, including Japan, together with the EU, have introduced a price cap system for Russian crude oil since December 2022 and for Russian oil products in February 2023, with the aim of stabilizing international oil prices while reducing Russian energy revenues. In addition, based on a recognition of the importance of ensuring the effectiveness of sanctions amid Russia's prolonged aggression against Ukraine, the G7 leaders confirmed at the G7 Leaders' Video Conference in February and the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May that the G7 would further prevent evasion or circumvention of sanctions against Russia, and in December, Japan decided to introduce measures such as asset freezes and export bans against third country entities suspected of involvement in sanction circumvention or evasion. In addition, the G7, including Japan, has also introduced measures to ban imports

of non-industrial diamonds from Russia beginning in January 2024.

Regarding the energy sector, the Government of Japan intends to phase out its dependence on Russian energy, including coal and oil, and will take this step in a manner that minimizes adverse effects on Japanese people's lives and business activities. However, the government policy remains focused on maintaining Japan's interests in the "Sakhalin 1" and "Sakhalin 2" oil and natural gas development projects in Russia, as these projects are important to Japan's energy security from the perspective of ensuring a stable supply over the medium- to long-term.

(3) Situation in Belarus

Belarus began joint military exercises with Russia on February 10, 2022, and although it did not participate in Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which began on February 24, it has supported Russian military actions through the use of its territory. Western countries strengthened sanctions against Belarus, and Japan introduced sanctions against Belarus for the first time.

Since then, President Lukashenko has held a series of meetings with President Putin in Moscow and other places where they have continued to discuss issues such as the continuation of joint military exercises, security and economic initiatives between the two countries, and the defense of the Union State of Russia and Belarus.⁵

In March 2023, President Putin said he had agreed to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus. President Lukashenko acknowledged deployment in the country, also made a statement to the effect that all tactical nuclear weapons would be controlled by Belarus, and further stated that the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons was completed in October. The international community condemned this as a further escalation of the situation as Russia continues its aggression against Ukraine.

After the "march for justice" by the Russian private military company "Wagner," some "Wagner" troops moved to Belarus, which was noted to have caused a temporary increase in tensions with neighboring

⁵ In December 1999, the two countries signed a treaty creating the Union State of Russia and Belarus with the aim of achieving political, economic, and military integration and equality between the two peoples in social life.

countries, including Poland and Lithuania, which border the country.

Belarus will hold parliamentary elections in 2024 and presidential elections in 2025, two events that will be closely watched.

3 Countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus

(1) Overview

Countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus are situated in a location of geopolitical importance that connects East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Russia, and have abundant natural resources such as oil, natural gas, uranium, and rare metals. The stability of the entire region, including Central Asia and the Caucasus, has also been of great importance in addressing key issues facing the international community such as the fight against terrorism and counternarcotics.

In the wake of Russia's aggression against Ukraine that began in 2022, Central Asian and Caucasian countries that have close geopolitical and economic ties with Russia have each been forced to take a cautious approach. The countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus have been absent from or abstained from voting on UN General Assembly resolutions related to the aggression against Ukraine, with the exception of Georgia, which has expressed support for Ukraine, and many countries have avoided making their positions clear externally. Meanwhile, at the ninth Foreign Ministers' Meeting of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue held in December 2022, Japan and the five Central Asian countries concurred on the importance of upholding the UN Charter and other international laws, which includes respecting the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all countries and peacefully settling disputes.

Japan and the Central Asian and Caucasian countries have traditionally maintained friendly relations. In 2023, with a return to normal following the COVID-19 pandemic, the flow of people to and from the Central Asian and Caucasian countries increased, including

high-level visits between Japan and these countries. Japan is strengthening bilateral relations with these countries through high-level dialogues, including the framework of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue, which will mark its 20th anniversary in 2024, as it continues efforts to promote regional cooperation.

In addition, in light of the current international situation, the importance of the "Caspian Sea Route," a transportation route linking Central Asia and Europe via the Caucasus region without passing through Russia, is attracting increasing attention from Central Asian and Caucasian countries as well as Western countries. Japan has also actively participated in discussions on strengthening connectivity in the region. In March, the Twelfth Tokyo Dialogue of "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue, whose theme was "Connectivity with Central Asia and the Caucasus," was held jointly with the Global Forum of Japan⁶ with the participation of experts from Central Asian and Caucasian countries, international organizations, and businesses.

(2) Central Asian Countries

The countries of Central Asia are partners of Japan in maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order, and Japan is promoting diplomacy aimed at contributing to peace and stability in Central Asia.

Japan launched the framework of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue in 2004, and has held nine Foreign Ministers' Meetings as well as various discussions with the participation of experts and business people. In recent years, the international community has shown increasing interest in strengthening relations with Central Asian countries, and many countries have held summit meetings with Central Asian countries. Japan will also strengthen relations with these regions through high-level dialogues and other means in 2024, the 20th anniversary of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue (See the Column on page 161).

In Uzbekistan, the constitution was amended in May, extending the presidential term to seven years. In addition, presidential elections were held in July before the end of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's term, after which he was reelected for the second time. President

⁶ Global Forum of Japan: A membership-based voluntary organization for private, non-profit, non-partisan, independent, policy-oriented intellectual international exchange (Source: the Global Forum's website Copyright (C) The Global Forum of Japan (GFJ))

Mirziyoyev continues to pursue his own reform path. In terms of Japan's relations with Uzbekistan, the Government of Japan has actively engaged in high-level political dialogues that include a visit to Uzbekistan by Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs YOSHIKAWA Yumi in January, a telephone call between Foreign Minister Hayashi and Acting Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov in March, a visit to Japan by Deputy Prime Minister Jamshid Kuchkarov in July, and a telephone call between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Foreign Minister Saidov in October.

Kazakhstan held elections for the Senate in January and for the Majilis (Lower House) in March, both of which were won by the ruling party, indicating that the country's internal political situation is stable. In terms of Japan's relations with Kazakhstan, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshikawa visited Kazakhstan in January, and in September, Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Murat Nurtleu to confirm that Japan and Kazakhstan, which chairs the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue, will work together to coordinate the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogues and summit meetings, and discussed ways in which the two countries can deepen cooperation in all areas, including strengthening connectivity and the energy sector.

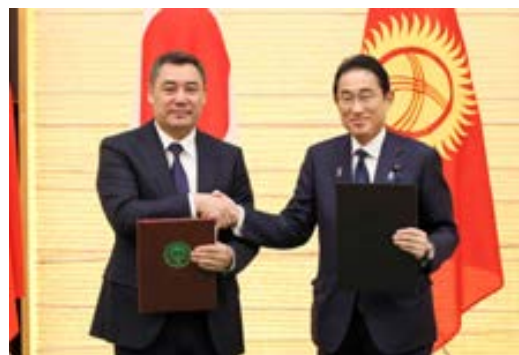
With regard to Japan's relations with the Kyrgyz Republic, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshikawa visited the Kyrgyz Republic in August and met with Foreign Minister Zheenbek Kulubaev and Deputy Foreign Minister Rysbek Moldogaziev to discuss ways to strengthen bilateral relations based on the ninth Foreign Ministers' Meeting of "Central

Asia plus Japan" Dialogue and bilateral foreign ministerial meetings held in December 2022. In November, President Sadyr Zhaparov Foreign Minister Kulubaev, and others visited Japan. As his first visit to Japan, President Zhaparov visited Tokyo and Kyoto, where he held his first summit meeting with Prime Minister Kishida. Prime Minister Kishida confirmed friendly relations with the Kyrgyz Republic, and the two leaders signed the Joint Statement on friendship and comprehensive partnership in the new era between Japan and the Kyrgyz Republic, in which they shared an intention to develop bilateral relations and confirmed cooperation toward sustainable development. On this occasion, they also signed and exchanged notes on the Grant Assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic for the "Project for the Improvement of Irrigation Maintenance Equipment," exchanged notes verbales on the introduction of diplomatic and official visa waiver measures for diplomatic and official passport holders, and signed memoranda of cooperation between legal authorities and between health authorities.

With regard to Japan's relations with Tajikistan, the two countries held the second meeting of the "Tajik-Japanese Intergovernmental Commission on Economic, Technical and Scientific Cooperation" in Tajikistan in March. In August, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshikawa visited Tajikistan and met with Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Muhriddin and Minister of Economic Development and Trade Zavqi Zavqizoda, respectively, to discuss strengthening bilateral relations based on the ninth Foreign Ministers' Meeting of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue and the bilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in December 2022.



Japan-Kazakhstan Foreign Ministers' Meeting (September 20, New York, U.S.)



Japan-Kyrgyzstan Summit Meeting (November 20, Tokyo; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

In Turkmenistan, the People's Council, the supreme organ of government authority, was established in January, and the parliament reverted from a bicameral to a unicameral structure. In addition, former President Serdar Berdimuhamedov assumed the position of Chairman of the People's Council and the newly created position of "National Leader." In terms of Japan's relations with Turkmenistan, there was an active flow of dignitaries to and from Japan. In June, State Minister for Digital Transformation OGUSHI Masaki and representatives of the Turkmenistan-Japan Parliamentary Friendship Group attended the opening ceremony of Arkadag, a city built as a smart city. In July, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshikawa visited Turkmenistan and met with the Chairperson of the Parliament Dunyagozel Gulmanova, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Rashid Meredov, and Deputy Prime Minister for Economy, Banking, and International Finance Hojamyrat Geldimyradov. Also in November, Minister of Trade and Foreign Economic Relations Begench Gochmollayev attended a meeting of the countries participating in the 2025 Osaka-Kansai Expo in Osaka. In December, an economic mission led by Rahimberdi Jepbarov, Chairman of the Board of the State Bank for Foreign Economic Affairs, visited Japan and held discussions with relevant Japanese ministries and agencies. Furthermore, negotiations for the conclusion of a tax convention between Japan and Turkmenistan, which began in July, resulted in a substantive agreement during the second round of negotiations, which took place in October.

In recent years, there has also been a growing movement among Central Asian countries and neighboring countries to promote regional cooperation. In 2023, there were a number of meetings attended by the leaders of Central Asian countries, including a Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), summit meeting (July), a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) summit meeting (October), a meeting of the Organization of Turkic States (November), a Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), summit meeting (November), and a Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) summit meeting (December). Among the Central Asian countries, the fifth meeting of the Central Asian Leaders Summit took place in Tajikistan in September.

(3) Caucasus Countries

The Caucasus region has a potential to be a gateway connecting Asia, Europe and the Middle East, and geopolitical importance that directly affects the peace and stability of the international community. Meanwhile, problems exist in Georgia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and Azerbaijan and Armenia have long been at odds over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Japan announced the Caucasus Initiative in 2018, which is comprised of two pillars: (1) assistance for human resources development for state building (human resources development) and (2) assistance for paving the way to "Appealing Caucasus" (infrastructure development and business environment improvement), develops its diplomacy in line with this initiative.

Regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, Japan has strongly urged all parties to peacefully resolve issues involving the region through dialogue. In 2023, Azerbaijan established a checkpoint along the Lachin Corridor, the only transportation route connecting Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, extending last year's restrictions on traffic and logistics along this corridor and raising concerns about a humanitarian crisis.

In September, Azerbaijan conducted military operations in Nagorno-Karabakh, bringing the entire region under Azerbaijani control and bringing more than 100,000 displaced people from the region into Armenia. In foreign ministers' statements and at the UN Security Council and other forums, Japan expressed serious concern about the worsening situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and called for a suspension of military activities by Azerbaijan and a peaceful resolution of the situation for all parties through dialogue. Furthermore, given the large number of displaced persons, Japan decided in October to provide 2 million U.S. dollars in emergency grant aid through international organizations. In December, the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Azerbaijan issued a joint statement reaffirming their willingness to normalize relations and conclude a peace treaty based on respect for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, and stating that they support a prisoner exchange, the withdrawal of Armenia's candidacy for the 29th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) in 2024, and Azerbaijan's holding of

COP29, which Japan welcomed as a step toward confidence-building measures aimed at achieving a peace accord between the two countries. These developments have also drawn the attention of the international community to the relationship between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

In terms of Japan's relations with Azerbaijan, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshikawa visited the country in May and met with Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources Mukhtar Babayev, Chairman of the State Customs Committee Shahin Baghirov, and Deputy Foreign Minister Fariz Rzayev, and they concurred on strengthening cooperation with regard to the economy and regional connectivity. In August, the tax convention between Japan and Azerbaijan entered into force and is expected to further promote investment and economic exchange between the two countries.

In terms of Japan's relations with Armenia, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshikawa visited Armenia in May and met with President of the National Assembly Alen Simonyan, Deputy Foreign Minister Mnatsakan Safaryan, and Deputy Minister of the Economy Rafayel Gevorgyan, and they concurred on deepening bilateral relations and working closely together, including with regard to the economy and interparliamentary exchange. In November, Economy Minister Vahan Kerobyan visited Japan and attended a meeting of the international

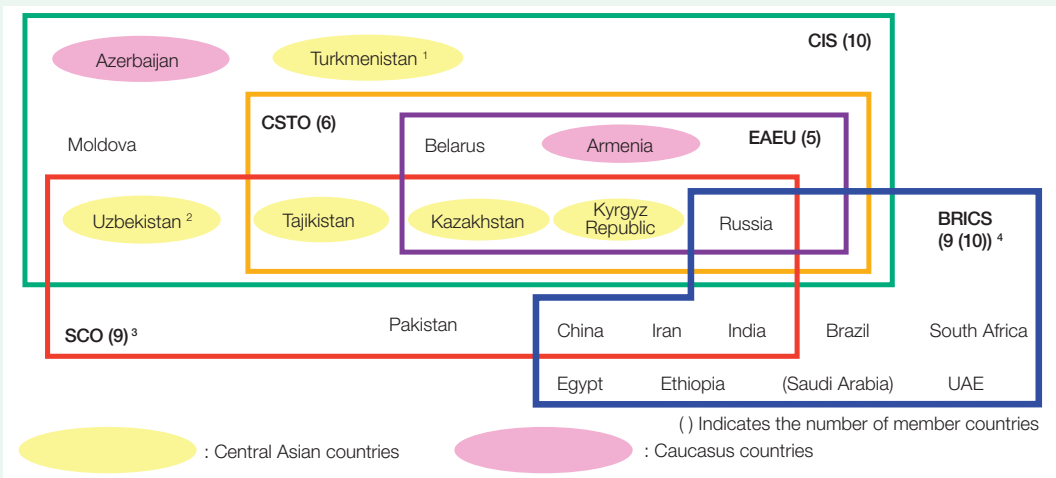


Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshikawa visits the No. 13 kindergarten of Etchmiadzin Municipality in Etchmiadzin, Armenia, during her visit to three Caucasus countries (May 3, Etchmiadzin, Armenia)

participating countries of the World Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai held in Osaka, as well as meetings with related ministries.

Regarding Japan's relations with Georgia, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshikawa visited the country in May and met separately with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Levan Davitashvili and First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Lasha Darsalia to discuss regional developments, including the situation in Ukraine, and to share an intention to promote cooperation in bilateral relations. In December, the European Council decided to grant Georgia candidate country status for EU membership.

Major Frameworks involving Russia, Central Asia, and Caucasus countries



<Note>
1 Turkmenistan has been an associate member of the CIS since 2005.
2 Uzbekistan ceased its membership in the CSTO in 2012.
3 Iran officially joined the SCO in 2023.
4 See footnote 2 in Chapter 1 Page 16

<Abbreviations>
CIS : Commonwealth of Independent States (10)
CSTO : Collective Security Treaty Organization (6)
EAEU : Eurasian Economic Union (5)
SCO : Shanghai Cooperation Organization (9)

COLUMN

Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue

Although separated by thousands of kilometers by sea and land, Japan and Central Asia share an Asian climate and culture, and their history of exchange via the Silk Road dates back more than a thousand years. When the five Central Asian countries gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Japan was one of the first to establish diplomatic relations the following year, developing friendly relations among the nations. In 1997, Japan began conducting “Silk Road diplomacy” with three pillars: political dialogue, cooperation for economic and resource development, and peace building.

In 2004, Japan launched the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue as a new dimension for cooperation with Central Asia. For Central Asia, it was the first attempt to have a framework for dialogue between the entire region and a third country. The idea was born as an extension of Japan’s awareness of the role it could play because of its geographical distance from Central Asia, which is surrounded by major powers, and Japan’s proposal was accepted by Central Asia.

At the time, Central Asia was in the midst of prosperity and development, undertaking nation-building efforts that included shifting to a market economy and democratization. At the same time, the region was dealing with localized terrorist attacks and other indicators of instability. Looking at the international environment, following the terrorist attacks on the United States (U.S.) (9/11), the U.S. began stationing its military in Central Asia while Russia and China also worked to maintain and strengthen their influence in the region. Under these circumstances, the stable development of the Central Asian region was very important as it would lead to peace and stability in the international community, including Japan. Furthermore, Japan believed that Central Asia could achieve stability and prosperity quickly and more steadily through intra-regional cooperation than if each country addressed its challenges on its own. With the Central Asian countries playing the main roles, Japan aimed to play a catalytic role in supporting the development of Central Asia based on the three basic principles of “respect for diversity,” “competition and coordination,” and “open cooperation.”

Over the 20 years of the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue, many political dialogues and people-to-people exchanges have taken place, including nine Foreign Ministers’ Meetings. During this period, the Central Asian countries have steadily developed. As a result of Japan’s long-standing and ongoing support for human resource development, many people are active in their respective fields, and it is not unusual to hear fluent Japanese spoken in government-to-government discussions. The tracks that remain from 20 years of cooperation can be felt.

However, after 20 years, new challenges are emerging. Especially now, with the surrounding international environment growing more severe, the time is ripe for intra-regional cooperation, mainly among the countries of Central Asia. This is the starting point of the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue and is the time for the essence of mutually beneficial cooperation demonstrated through many years of effort to be utilized. Through relationships of trust that have been cultivated over the years, Japan will continue to respect the efforts of each country while redoubling its own efforts to engage with the region as an important partner in achieving free, open, and sustainable development in Central Asia.



Character created by manga artist MORI Kaoru to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue



7

The Middle East and North Africa

1 Overview

The Middle East and North Africa (the Middle East) is located in a geopolitically important area: the crossroads of Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia and South Asia. The region is a vital supplier of energy, representing approximately 50% of the world's oil reserves and 40% of the world's natural gas reserves and also is a market with high potential, pursuing the diversification of economy and decarbonization, especially in the Gulf countries, against a backdrop of a high population growth rate.

Meanwhile, the region has gone through various conflicts and disputes throughout its history, and still faces a number of destabilizing factors and challenges. In recent years, there have been signs of a change in the situation in the region toward improving relations, including the normalization of diplomatic relations between Israel and some Arab countries, but a series of events triggered by the terror attacks against Israel by Hamas and others in October has once again exposed instability in the Israeli-Palestinian issue. The immediate release of the hostages, improvement of the critical humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, and the early calming of the situation have become urgent issues, and Japan, in close cooperation with the countries concerned, has been vigorously engaged in humanitarian assistance and diplomatic outreach.

In some other countries and regions, tensions and severe humanitarian situations persist. In recent years, regional tensions have been growing over Iran. The civil war continues in Syria, resulting in a large number of refugees and internally displaced persons, and it has made a great impact on the stability of the entire region, including its neighboring countries. In Yemen, parties concerned, including the Government of Yemen and the Houthis, agreed on a temporary truce in April 2022, but this expired in October, and the severe security and humanitarian situation continues. In addition, since November,

there have been a series of attacks by the Houthis against civilian ships sailing in the waters around the Arabian Peninsula, including the Red Sea. There are fears that the developments in Israel and Palestine may further aggravate these situations and cause further instability in the region. Furthermore, in Afghanistan, the humanitarian situation has further deteriorated since the Taliban took control of Kabul in August 2021.

The Biden administration in the United States (U.S.), which was inaugurated in January 2021, has recently been working vigorously, particularly to address the rising regional tensions surrounding the situation in Gaza and the critical humanitarian situation, including by reaching out to Israel and other relevant countries. China has also been strengthening its ties in the Middle East, and in March it was announced that Iran and Saudi Arabia, which had cut diplomatic ties since 2016, had agreed to normalize diplomatic relations through China's mediation.

Japan imports over 90% of its crude oil from the Middle East, and it is extremely important for Japan's peace and prosperity to promote peace and stability in the Middle East and to maintain and develop good relations with countries in the region. From this perspective, Japan in recent years has been striving to strengthen relations with Middle Eastern countries in a wide range of fields that include the economy, politics, security, culture and people-to-people exchanges. Prime Minister Kishida visited Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Qatar in July. He discussed with the leaders of these countries and others a wide range of topics, including regional and international affairs and bilateral relations, in addition to cooperation in various fields, including energy and decarbonization. In September, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. In Egypt, in addition to bilateral events, he attended the Third Japan-Arab Political Dialogue, where he affirmed further strengthening of cooperation with 21 member

2 Situation in the Middle East

(1) Middle East Peace Process

A Developments in the Middle East Peace Process

The Middle East Peace Process has stagnated since negotiations between Israel and Palestine faltered in April 2014. After the inauguration of the Biden administration in the U.S., there were momentary signs that indicated the resumption of cooperation between the parties, and there were some positive developments such as high-level contacts. However, at the end of December 2022, a coalition government that included a far-right party was formed in Israel, and since then, violent acts and clashes have occurred intermittently in Israel and Palestine, including in Jerusalem, resulting in numerous casualties. Violent exchanges continued, including armed clashes between Palestinian militants in Gaza and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in May 2023 and a large-scale IDF mop-up operation in the West Bank city of Jenin in July.

Against this backdrop, on October 7, Hamas and other Palestinian militants launched thousands of rockets from the Gaza Strip, and a large number of fighters breached Israeli checkpoints and borders, killing and kidnapping IDF soldiers as well as civilians, including foreign nationals. At least 1,200 Israelis were killed and more than 4,500 wounded. In addition, more than 200 people, including foreign nationals, were taken into the Gaza Strip and held hostage. This prompted the IDF to launch large-scale airstrikes on the Gaza Strip, followed by a ground operation inside the Gaza Strip. According to the United Nations (UN) and the Palestinian Ministry of Health, as of December 2023, more than 20,000 people had been killed and 50,000 injured in the Gaza Strip, and approximately 1.9 million people, or 85% of the population, had been forced to evacuate.

Since October 8, armed clashes have continued on Israel's northern border, with Lebanese Hezbollah (anti-government forces) shelling IDF bases near the border and major cities in northern Israel, entering Israeli



Foreign Minister Hayashi attends the First Japan-GCC Foreign Ministers' Meeting (September 7, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia)

states and one organization of the League of Arab States and exchanged views on regional and international affairs. In Saudi Arabia, the first Japan-GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council)¹ Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held to strengthen not only bilateral relations but also relations with regional cooperating organizations. In response to the situation in Israel and Palestine, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Egypt in October to attend the Cairo Summit for Peace, visited Israel, Palestine, and Jordan in November, and held foreign ministers' meetings with Iran, Jordan, and Lebanon in Geneva in December to help calm down the situation as soon as possible, ensure the safety of citizens, and improve the humanitarian situation. In these meetings, Foreign Minister Kamikawa also affirmed close cooperation toward regional stability with the relevant countries. In addition, amid the instability in the energy market in the wake of the situation in Ukraine, Japan repeatedly conducted high-level outreach to the Gulf countries to help with stabilization of the international crude oil market, including through telephone calls.

In 2023, several natural disasters occurred in the Middle East, including an earthquake in southeastern Türkiye (February), an earthquake in central Morocco (September), flooding in eastern Libya (September), and an earthquake in western Afghanistan (October), causing extensive damage. Japan has decided on and implemented various forms of humanitarian assistance, including through international organizations, to address the damage caused by these disasters.

¹ Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): Established in 1981 by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait. Its purpose is to promote coordination, integration, and cooperation among participating countries in all fields, including defense and economy.

territory, and the IDF returning fire. Since October 19, Yemen's Houthis have been conducting intermittent attacks on Israel using missiles and drones, and on November 19, a Japanese-related ship was "seized" off the coast of Yemen. The attacks on vessels have continued since then, seriously affecting the free navigation of vessels in the Red Sea and surrounding waters, which are important sea lanes for the global economy.

As the military conflict continued, on November 22, with the mediation of Qatar, Egypt, and the U.S., Israel and Hamas agreed to a deal for the release of the hostages, and between November 24 and 30, 81 Israeli hostages and 24 foreign nationals were released, and 240 Palestinians who had been imprisoned in Israel were released. During this time, fighting ceased and humanitarian supplies, including fuel, were allowed to enter the Gaza Strip. However, fighting resumed on December 1, with the IDF launching a ground operation into the southern Gaza Strip. The IDF claimed that Hamas and others were building underground tunnels, including within hospital grounds, for military use.

At the UN, after four draft resolutions were rejected by the UN Security Council, resolution 2712, which focused on the protection of children in the Gaza Strip and included calls for a humanitarian pause and the immediate and unconditional release of hostages held by Hamas and others was adopted on November 15, and resolution 2720, on expanding and monitoring humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip, was adopted on December 22. As a member of the UN Security Council, Japan worked actively towards the adoption of these resolutions. Furthermore, at the UN General Assembly, a resolution proposed by Jordan calling for a humanitarian ceasefire was adopted by a majority on October 27, and a resolution proposed by Egypt calling for a humanitarian ceasefire was adopted by a majority on December 12. Furthermore, on December 29, South Africa filed a lawsuit against Israel with the International Court of Justice (ICJ), requesting provisional measures against Israel. In response, on January 26, 2024, the ICJ issued an order for provisional measures ordering Israel to take measures to prevent genocide and incitement to genocide in its relations with the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, and to take measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance.

B The Government of Japan's Efforts

In working toward achieving a "two-state solution" that would enable Israel and Palestine to coexist in peace, Japan, in cooperation with the international community, has actively contributed through the three pillars of political dialogue with stakeholders, confidence building among the concerned parties, and economic assistance for the Palestinians.

As Japan's unique initiative, it has been promoting the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" initiative, aiming at facilitating economic self-reliance of Palestine over the mid- and long-term through regional cooperation among Japan, Palestine, Israel, and Jordan. As of the end of 2023, 14 Palestinian private companies are operating in the flagship Jericho Agro-Industrial Park (JAIP) project, creating approximately 200 jobs. In addition, Japan is mobilizing the resources and economic development knowledge of East Asian countries to support Palestinian nation building through the Conference on the Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD).

In response to the armed conflict between Israel and Palestinian militants such as Hamas since October 7, Japan has resolutely condemned the terror attacks by Hamas and others and confirmed that Israel has the right to defend itself and its people in accordance with international law. Japan has consistently called for the immediate release of the hostages and the assurance of the safety of civilians, for all parties to act in accordance with international law, and for a prompt calming of the situation. Japan has also made proactive diplomatic efforts towards a ceasefire in fighting and the securing of an environment enabling humanitarian assistance activities. Prime Minister Kishida held a summit meeting with Egypt, Israel, Qatar, Jordan, Iran (a telephone call), and Türkiye during the 28th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) in December and confirmed cooperation and communication for calming down the situation as soon as possible. Foreign Minister Kamikawa attended the Cairo Summit for Peace on October 21, and visited Israel, Palestine, and Jordan from November 3 to 4, holding foreign ministers' meetings with each country and region. Additionally, within the G7 framework, foreign ministers held frank discussions on the



Foreign Minister Kamikawa delivers a speech at the Cairo Summit for Peace (October 21, Cairo, Egypt)

situation in Israel and Palestine at the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in November and issued the "G7 Foreign Ministers' Statement on the Situation in Israel and Gaza" on November 29. At the UN, as a member of the UN Security Council, Japan lobbied vigorously for the adoption of a resolution on the expansion of humanitarian assistance to and monitoring of the Gaza Strip, so that the UN Security Council could fulfill its responsibilities. Furthermore, since October, Japan has announced and implemented humanitarian assistance totaling approximately 75 million U.S. dollars to Palestine and material assistance through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), in order to improve the critical humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. Regarding the provisional measures order issued by the ICJ on January 26, 2024, the next day, on January 27, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement by the Foreign Minister expressing Japan's position, stating that "The order of provisional measures of the ICJ, the principal international judicial organ of the UN, is legally binding on the parties to the dispute, and to be observed in good faith," and that "As a country that attaches great importance to the rule of law in the international community, Japan avails this opportunity to reiterate its support for the ICJ's role in this regard."

(2) Israel

Israel excels in the development of advanced technology and innovation, and holds importance for the Japanese economy as well as for the stability of the Middle East.

After the general election in November 2022, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu received a cabinet nomination,

and a coalition government including far-right parties was formed in Israel at the end of December of the same year. Under his administration, national opinion has so far been divided over the reform of the judicial system, and large-scale demonstrations have continuously occurred in the country. In addition, the administration has promoted a settlement policy in the West Bank, and clashes have repeatedly occurred between Palestinians and Israeli settlers.

Following the terror attacks by Hamas and others on October 7, Prime Minister Netanyahu declared a "state of war," established a united cabinet that included the main opposition party and launched a military operation against the Gaza Strip.

As for relations with Japan, regular direct flights between Japan and Israel began operation in March, and three meetings of the "Joint Study Group on the possibility of a Japan-Israel Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)" were held in 2023. In response to the October 7 terror attacks, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Israel in November and met with President Isaac Herzog and Minister of Foreign Affairs Eli Cohen, as well as with the families of those who were killed or kidnapped in the Hamas terror attacks.

(3) Palestine

Based on the 1993 Oslo Accords and other agreements, the Palestinian Authority (PA) began self-rule in the West Bank of the Jordan River and Gaza Strip from 1995. Prime Minister Abbas assumed office as president after the presidential elections held in 2005. Following this, relations between the Fatah led by the president and Hamas deteriorated, and Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip by military force. In 2017, an agreement in principle was reached through Egyptian mediation to transfer authority in Gaza to the Palestinian Authority. In 2022, through Algerian mediation, the Algiers Declaration, a reconciliation document between Palestinian factions, was signed, which includes the holding of Palestinian Legislative Council elections within one year, but the division remains, with the West Bank of the Jordan River still being held by Fatah and the Gaza Strip remaining under Hamas's de facto control.

Regarding relations with Japan, in September, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Riad



Japan-Palestine Foreign Ministers' Meeting (November 3, Ramallah, Palestine)

Malki, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Palestine, during the Japan-Arab Political Dialogue in Cairo. In November, following the October 7 terror attacks on Israel by Hamas and others, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Palestine and held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Malki.

(4) Afghanistan

Located at the nexus of the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia, Afghanistan is a geopolitically important country that has historically been a crossroads of various religions, cultures, and ethnic groups.

The Taliban seized control of the capital, Kabul, in August 2021, and announced formation of a “transitional government” the following month, but a lack of ethnic and religious inclusiveness has been pointed out. The international community has also expressed its serious concern over reports of significant restrictions on the rights of women and girls, including the suspension of secondary and higher education for girls and the suspension of Afghan female staff from NGOs and UN agencies. Although security has improved, sporadic terrorist attacks by groups affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continue to occur in various parts of the country.

Against this backdrop, Japan continues to conduct

direct engagement with Taliban and call on to promote the social and political participation of all Afghan citizens, including women and social minorities, the elimination of restrictions, and the building of constructive relations with the international community, to avoid Afghanistan becoming once again a breeding ground for terrorism and isolation from the international community as it was in the 1990s. In 2023, as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and penholder² on the situation in Afghanistan, Japan worked with the UAE to draft and coordinate relevant resolutions, contributing to the unanimous adoption of UN Security Council resolution 2678 on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)³ and resolution 2721 to implement the recommendations made in the independent assessment of Afghanistan⁴ report, which provides guidance for the international community's engagement in Afghanistan.

According to a UN announcement, approximately two-thirds of the country's population needs humanitarian assistance, and Japan has continued to provide humanitarian assistance and support for basic human needs (minimum requirements for a basic human life) through international organizations even after the Taliban took control of Kabul. Also in 2023, in response to the damage caused by the large-scale earthquake that occurred in the western part of the country in October, Japan provided emergency relief supplies through JICA and 3 million U.S. dollars in emergency grant aid through international organizations. In December, Japan decided to provide additional support of approximately 58.4 million U.S. dollars in the FY2023 supplementary budget. As a result, the total amount of Japanese assistance since August 2021 is approximately 470 million U.S. dollars (as of the end of 2023).

(5) Iran

Iran is a major Shiite regional power with a population of about 85 million that boasts abundant natural

² Refers to the member of the Security Council that leads discussions on a particular agenda item and drafts documents such as resolutions and the chair's statements.

³ UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan): Established in 2002 based on UN Security Council resolution 1401, its mission includes providing political and strategic advice to the Afghan government on the peace process. Even after the Taliban took control of Kabul in August 2021, UNAMA has continued its activities in Afghanistan, lobbying the Taliban and coordinating humanitarian aid.

⁴ Independent Assessment of Afghanistan: On March 16, 2023, the UN Security Council, through Resolution 2679, requested the UN Secretary-General to conduct an independent assessment of Afghanistan on ways to address the challenges facing the country. In response to this, in April the UN Secretary-General appointed Feridun Sinirlioglu, (a Turkish national) as the Special Coordinator to lead the assessment and had him prepare a report on the independent assessment, which he submitted to the UN Security Council on November 8. The report calls for building trust between the international community and Afghanistan, continued cooperation to address key challenges, and pursuing dialogue among Afghans, and recommends the establishment of mechanisms to strengthen engagement in Afghanistan, including the appointment of a special envoy for Afghanistan by the UN Secretary-General.

resources. Japan has developed a traditionally friendly relationship with Iran for more than 90 years.

Following the previous Trump administration's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA: Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), since July 2019, Iran has taken steps to undermine its commitment to the nuclear deal. As of the end of 2023, Iran has produced uranium enriched up to 60%, left some safeguard issues unresolved, suspended the implementation of the Additional Protocol that allowed unannounced inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and has withdrawn the designation of some IAEA inspectors of certain nationalities. Japan has consistently supported the Iran nuclear deal, and calls for a constructive response from Iran, including the full and unconditional implementation of the March 2023 joint statement between Iran and the IAEA. Under the Biden Administration, despite various diplomatic efforts for both the U.S. and Iran to return to the nuclear agreement, at this point in time (as of the end of December 2023), mutual return by the U.S. and Iran to compliance with their commitment under JCPOA has not been realized. Furthermore, eight years have passed since the adoption of the Iran nuclear deal on October 18, and some of the measures against Iran based on UN Security Council resolution 2231 regarding the Iranian nuclear issue have expired, and Japan also lifted its measures based on the resolution. On the other hand, Japan takes strict measures under the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Act with respect to the transfer of goods and technology related to the means of delivery of nuclear weapons, regardless of whether the provisions of the UN Security Council resolution.

Against this backdrop, the situation surrounding Iran continues to be highly tense. For example, in addition to the cases that the Iranian Navy captured a Marshall Islands-registered tanker and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy seized a tanker of Panamanian registry, the situation in Israel and Palestine since October led to attacks on U.S. interests in Syria and Iraq by forces believed to be close to Iran, as well as attacks on ships in the Red Sea and surrounding waters, which led to retaliatory attacks by the U.S., the killing of a senior Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps military advisor in Syria, an explosion during

a memorial service for former Iranian Revolutionary Guard commander Qassem Soleimani, and Iran's retaliatory attacks in response to these incidents. Japan has used various opportunities, including at the heads of state and foreign minister level, to urge Iran to exercise restraint regarding the forces over which it has influence.

Meanwhile, there were also efforts to ease tensions regarding Iran. In March, Iran agreed to normalize diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia, with which it had severed diplomatic ties in 2016, mediated by China after mediation efforts by Iraq and Oman. Moreover, in September, Iranian frozen assets in the Republic of Korea (ROK) were released and an exchange of detainees between the U.S. and Iran was achieved through mediation by Oman and Qatar.

Regarding Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the debate over accusations in the international community about Iran's provision of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) to Russia continues.

Japan is an ally of the U.S. but has maintained good relations with Iran for many years, continuing bilateral cooperation in areas that directly benefit the Iranian people, such as health and medical care, the environment, and disaster preparation, as well as aiding Afghan refugees in Iran. In addition, Prime Minister Kishida held talks with President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi in New York during his visit to the U.S. in September, as in the previous year, and held a Japan-Iran Summit telephone call in December. Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian when he visited Japan in August, and Foreign Minister Kamikawa also held a telephone call with him in October and in person in December. In addition to these high-level talks, Japan and Iran held Japan-Iran Vice-Ministerial Consultation in April and December, Japan-Iran Consular Forum in January, Japan-Iran Human Rights Dialogue in October, and Japan-Iran Consultation on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues in November. In this way, Japan has been making its own diplomatic efforts to ease tensions and stabilize the situation in the Middle East by directly communicating its concerns to Iran on various issues at every opportunity, while continuing multilayered dialogues with Iran at various levels.

(6) Türkiye

Türkiye is an important regional power in various respects, including its geopolitical significance. As a member country of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Türkiye plays a significant role in regional security while proactively pursuing multifaceted diplomacy with Europe and the U.S., Russia, and countries in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Türkiye has traditionally been one of the friendliest countries with Japan, as epitomized by episodes such as the Ertuğrul Frigate incident in 1890.

In February 2023, a major earthquake with an epicenter in the southeastern part of Türkiye caused an unprecedented disaster, collapsing many buildings and claiming the lives of some 50,000 people. In recent years, high inflation has put a strain on people's lives, and the Turkish government has also faced backlash over its response to the earthquake. Amid this, presidential and parliamentary elections were held in May. In the presidential election, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was re-elected after a runoff vote, and in the parliamentary elections, the ruling coalition including President Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP)⁵ won. The election victory means President Erdoğan's term will run till 2028, and local elections in 2024 will be held without the united opposition's candidate being elected.

On the diplomatic front, facing serious inflation and an economic crisis, and in the run-up to the presidential election, the country has prioritized pragmatic approaches in its efforts to improve relations with neighboring countries. As a NATO member, Türkiye approved Finland's application for membership. On the other hand, since the terror attacks by Hamas and others, the situation between Israel and Palestine has become tense, and Türkiye has taken a stance of strongly condemning Israel, with which it had been improving relations.

Regarding relations with Japan, following the major earthquake that struck southeastern Türkiye in February, the Government of Japan dispatched its Japan Disaster Relief Search and Rescue Team on the day of the disaster, followed by a medical team and a team of experts, including Self-Defense Forces aircraft

to transport materials and equipment necessary for support. Furthermore, in addition to providing emergency relief supplies through JICA, Japan provided emergency humanitarian assistance totaling 8.5 million U.S. dollars through international organizations and Japanese NGOs. In addition, for the purpose of recovery and reconstruction, Japan has announced a total of 5 billion Japanese yen in grant aid for debris removal and the provision of medical equipment and heavy machinery, as well as 80 billion Japanese yen in loans to support the recovery and reconstruction of the affected areas. Also, Prime Minister Kishida and President Erdoğan held summit meetings during the G20 New Delhi Summit in September and at COP28 in December.

(7) Iraq

After the Iraq War in 2003, Iraq enacted a new constitution in 2005, and a government formed through democratic elections is in charge of running the country.

On the domestic political front, the country continued to be in a state of confusion after the election for the Iraqi Council of Representatives elections in 2021, with no cabinet being able to be formed. However, since the new government was formed in October 2022, Prime Minister Mohammed Al-Sudani has been running a stable administration with the support of a wide range of political forces. In June 2023, the budget law covering the three fiscal years from 2023 to 2025 came into effect, ensuring budgetary stability and administrative continuity. In addition, the first provincial council elections in 10 years were held in December, which are expected to strengthen local government and expand administrative services in the future.

Following the inauguration of the Sudani administration, domestic security in Iraq has improved significantly. However, since October, there have been successive attacks on U.S. military facilities in Iraq by pro-Iranian militia groups calling themselves the "Islamic Resistance of Iraq," and U.S. forces have also launched counterattacks against the pro-Iranian militia groups. The situation in Israel and Palestine has an impact on the situation in Iraq.

5 AKP : Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi

On the diplomatic front, Iraq is located between the regional powers of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye, and is seeking to strengthen relations with neighboring countries and pursue a balanced diplomacy. Iraq, along with Oman, contributed to the process of reaching an agreement on the normalization of diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which was mediated by China in March.

Since 2003, Japan has consistently provided support to Iraq, including economic cooperation worth approximately 13.8 billion U.S. dollars (as of the end of 2023).

(8) Jordan

The situation in Jordan remains relatively stable compared to other parts of the continuously turbulent Middle East region. Jordan has, under the leadership of King Abdullah II, played an important role in promoting the peace and stability of the region, such as with countermeasures against extremists, its acceptance of a large number of Syrian and Palestinian refugees, and active involvement in peace in the Middle East. The country's role is highly regarded by the international community.

Regarding relations with Japan, the imperial and royal families of the two countries have traditionally enjoyed friendly relations, and in April King Abdullah II and Crown Prince Hussein visited Japan.

At the summit level, Prime Minister Kishida held a summit meeting with His Majesty the King in April where they reaffirmed that the two countries would further develop their cooperative relationship under a strategic partnership. In October, Prime Minister Kishida held a summit telephone call with the King regarding the situation in the Gaza Strip. Prime Minister Kishida held a summit meeting with His Majesty the King during COP28 in December, where they primarily discussed the situation in Gaza, and reaffirmed that they would work closely together for the long-term stability of the region.

At the foreign ministerial level, Foreign Minister Hayashi held the Third Japan-Jordan Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Al Safadi, who visited Japan in March, as well as a telephone call on the situation in Syria in May. In September, when Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Jordan, he paid a courtesy call to the King of Jordan



Fourth Japan-Jordan Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue (September 3, Amman, Jordan)

and Prime Minister Bisher Hani Al-Khasawneh, and also held the Fourth Japan-Jordan Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue with Minister Safadi, where they shared the importance of realizing Middle East Peace on the basis of the "two-state solution" and supporting refugees. In October, Foreign Minister Kamikawa had a telephone call with Minister Safadi regarding the situation in Gaza, and in November also held a meeting with the Minister Safadi during her visit to Jordan. Foreign Minister Kamikawa also had another telephone call with Minister Safadi during her visit to San Francisco in the same month. The two ministers also met with each other during their visit to Geneva in December and welcomed the frequent meetings and deepening cooperation between them. They reaffirmed that they would work together to improve the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, calm down the situation as soon as possible, and further develop bilateral cooperation.

In addition, Japan has been cooperating in economic, security, and in other areas with Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, NISHIMURA Yasutoshi visiting Jordan in January, Chief of Staff, Joint Staff of the Japan Self-Defense Forces Yamazaki visiting in February, and Digital Minister KONO Taro visiting in July.

(9) The Gulf States and Yemen

In recent years, the Gulf States have been working on socioeconomic reforms with decarbonization and industrial diversification as key issues. The Gulf States are important partners for Japan from the perspective of energy security and other factors. In addition, Japan is promoting cooperation in a wide range of

areas under “Japan-Saudi Vision 2030” with Saudi Arabia and the “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Initiative (CSPI)” with the UAE, based on the view that these reforms will contribute to the long-term stability and prosperity of the Middle East. Prime Minister Kishida visited Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar in July and held talks with the leaders of each country where he proposed the concept of making the Middle East a global supply hub for clean energy and critical minerals and stated that the relationship with Japan would evolve from the traditional oil-producing and consuming countries to that of partners in a wide range of fields. In addition, regarding the Japan-GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which had been suspended since 2009, Japan and the GCC countries shared the view that both sides should resume negotiations in 2024. In September, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Saudi Arabia and attended the Japan-GCC Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, as well as holding bilateral meetings with the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, and Bahrain. Japan also held telephone calls with Gulf countries in response to the situations in Sudan and Gaza.

Saudi Arabia plays a leading role in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and is an important energy security partner, supplying about 40% of Japan’s crude oil imports. It is also the only Arab member of the G20 and is the leader of the Arab Islamic world, home to two of Islam’s holiest sites. In 2023, Saudi Arabia played a leading role in foreign policy discussions among Arab and Islamic countries, including normalizing diplomatic relations with Iran, holding direct talks with the Houthis in Yemen, encouraging Syria to return to the Arab League, and hosting an emergency joint summit of the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in response to the situation in Gaza. Furthermore, under “Saudi Vision 2030,” the country is promoting new initiatives in various fields with the aim of comprehensive socio-economic reforms. Through various measures, such as two meetings between Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammad bin Salman and Prime Minister Kishida in July and September, two telephone calls in October, a telephone call and a meeting between Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud and Foreign Minister Hayashi in April and in

September respectively, a telephone call with Foreign Minister Kamikawa in October, and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs FUKAZAWA Yoichi’s attendance at the 7th Ministerial Meeting of the Japan-Saudi Vision 2030 in December, the two countries reaffirmed their intention to further promote cooperation in various fields under the framework of Japan-Saudi Vision 2030, as well as cooperation under the Saudi-Japan Lighthouse Initiative for Clean Energy Cooperation, and strengthen their strategic partnership.

The UAE is also an important partner in terms of energy security, supplying approximately 40% of Japan’s crude oil imports. In addition, in 2023, the country served as the chair of COP28, and as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, it has played an important role in the international arena, including leading discussions with Japan on the issues surrounding Afghanistan and proposing a draft resolution on the situation in Gaza. Japan reaffirmed that it would further promote cooperation in various fields under the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Initiative (CSPI) framework, as well as cooperation under the “Japan-UAE Innovation Partnership” and the “Global Green Energy Hub” concept, and strengthen the strategic partnership between the two countries, through efforts such as a meeting between Prime Minister Kishida and President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in July, telephone calls in October and December, meetings by Foreign Minister Hayashi with Minister of State Ahmed bin Ali Al Sayegh in January and with Dr. Sultan Al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, Special Envoy to Japan of the UAE in April and Foreign Minister Abdullah in April



Japan-UAE Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (June 12, Tokyo)

(by telephone) and June, and the first ministerial level CSPI meeting between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister Jaber in September, and a telephone call with Foreign Minister Abdullah in October. In addition, in the defense field, the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, which was signed in May, entered into force in January 2024.

Qatar is one of the world's largest gas-producing countries, and it has been increasing its presence by leveraging its own channels with Iran, the Taliban, Hamas, and others to mediate peace talks between the U.S. and the Taliban, negotiations over the exchange of detainees between the U.S. and Iran, and hostage release negotiations between Israel and Hamas. During Prime Minister Kishida's visit to Qatar in July, the two leaders upgraded the comprehensive partnership between the two countries to a strategic partnership. Prime Minister Kishida also held a telephone call with the Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, in October and a meeting in December. In addition, the Second Japan-Qatar Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue was held between Foreign Minister Hayashi and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani in January, and a telephone call between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mohammed bin Abdulaziz AlKhulaifi, in October.

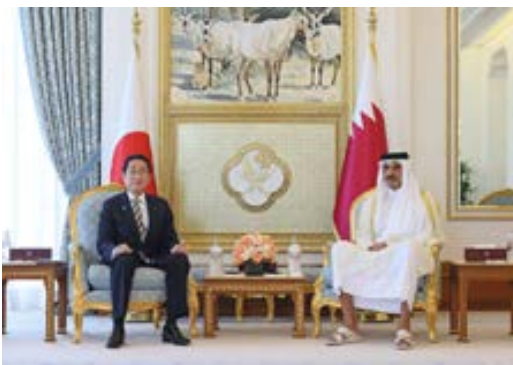
Oman leveraged its own channels with Iran and the Houthis to mediate negotiations on the normalization of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, negotiations between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis,

and negotiations on the exchange of detainees between the U.S. and Iran. Foreign Minister Hayashi held meetings with Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi in March and September, while Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a telephone call with him in November.

Regarding Kuwait, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs TAKAGI Kei visited the country in January, and Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah AlJaber Al-Sabah in September. Following the passing of Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in December, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan MORI Eisuke (member of the House of Representatives) paid a condolence visit to Kuwait and conveyed his condolences to the new Emir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Regarding Bahrain, the Japan-Bahrain Investment Agreement came into force in September, and later that month Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani.

Stability in Yemen is important not only for the peace and stability in the Middle East as a whole, but also from the perspective of securing sea lanes, which are directly related to Japan's energy security. In Yemen, the Houthis have continued to fight against the Government of Yemen and the Arab Coalition, but a nationwide ceasefire was agreed upon in April 2022, and although the agreement expired in October of the same year, the situation remains stable. In 2023, several rounds of direct talks between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis, mediated by Oman, have been held, showing positive moves towards a lasting peace in Yemen. Japan is also continuing its diplomatic efforts to hold dialogue between Yemenis, including through efforts by Special Assistant to the Minister for Foreign Affairs Hayashi to the leader of the Houthi negotiating team. In response to the situation in the Gaza Strip, in November, the Houthis, who stand in solidarity with Hamas, declared they would attack vessels related to Israel and "seized" a Japan-related vessel in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen, and have carried out a series of attacks against ships in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Japan firmly condemns these actions by the Houthis, calls for them to refrain from any actions that impede the free and safe navigation of ships, and



Japan-Qatar Summit Meeting (July 18, Doha, Qatar; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

is working in cooperation with relevant countries to achieve the early release of Japanese-related ships and crew members, and to stabilize the surrounding waters. In January 2024, the UN Security Council adopted the resolution 2722, co-sponsored by Japan and the U.S. to demand an immediate cease of all attacks by the Houthis against vessels in the Red Sea. Meanwhile, due to the protracted conflict, Yemen is facing a severe humanitarian situation that has been described as the “worst in the world.” Since 2015, Japan has cooperated with international organizations to provide humanitarian assistance to Yemen totaling approximately 430 million U.S. dollars (as of the end of 2023).

(10) Syria

A Changes in the situation

The Syrian crisis, which began in March 2011, has spanned over a decade, sees neither prospects of stabilization nor political resolution, and discussions under the Constitutional Committee, which was established in 2019 through the mediation of the UN to bring together the Government and dissidents, has not been in session for over a year. Meanwhile, the major earthquake that occurred in the southeastern part of Türkiye on February 6 also caused extensive damage in Syria, mainly in the north (with more than 5,900 casualties). The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria will reach 16.7 million in 2024, and the number of internally displaced persons exceeded 7.2 million as of the end of 2023, indicating that humanitarian needs are the highest since the crisis began.

In foreign relations, while Syria maintains cooperative relations with Russia and Iran, both of which supported the Assad administration, it was decided at an extraordinary meeting of Arab League Foreign Ministers on May 7 to reinstate Syria as a member as part of its efforts to improve relations with Arab countries that have been observed in recent years. In addition, in September, President Bashar al-Assad visited China for the first time in 19 years. Meanwhile, European countries and the U.S. remain cautious about resuming relations with the Government of Syria due to the Assad administration’s use of chemical weapons and human rights violations.⁶

On the military and security front, security in the capital Damascus is generally maintained, but the situation remains unstable, especially in the northern part of the country. Furthermore, tensions have risen between Israel and Palestine following the terror attacks against Israel by Hamas and others on October 7, and this has affected the situation in Syria, including an increase in airstrikes and other attacks in Syria.

B The Government of Japan’s Efforts

Japan has consistently maintained its position that the crisis in Syria cannot be resolved by any military means, and a political solution is indispensable, while continuous assistance is important for the improvement of humanitarian situation.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs YAMADA Kenji attended “the Supporting the future of Syria and the region, Brussels VII Conference” in June, and expressed Japan’s unwavering commitment to humanitarian assistance. Since 2012, Japan has provided humanitarian assistance totaling approximately 3.5 billion U.S. dollars to Syria and its neighboring countries (as of the end of 2023).

(11) Lebanon

Faced with various challenges due to the complex crisis, Lebanon has been in a political vacuum since the end of former President General Michel Aoun’s term at the end of October 2022, with no conclusion reached in parliamentary talks due to conflicts among political forces, and neither has a new president been elected nor has a new cabinet been formed. Administrative and financial reforms outlined in the working-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are significantly delayed, and the economic crisis is dragging on, with public services not functioning and high inflation. Since July, there have been incidents of military clashes in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. In addition, the situation in Gaza since October 7 has been affected by the ongoing military attacks between Israel and Hezbollah and others in the southern part of the country bordering Israel, with some pointing out a further deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation.

⁶ The state’s power violates the fundamental human rights of the people guaranteed by the Constitution.

Japan has provided a total of more than 290.9 million U.S. dollars in assistance (including broad-based assistance) since 2012 (as of the end of 2023). In August, Deputy Foreign Minister Yamada visited Beirut and held meetings with Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati and Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berry, among others. Furthermore, during her visit to Geneva in December, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants Abdallah Bou Habib and the two Ministers confirmed that the two countries would continue to work together to improve the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and to calm down the situation as soon as possible.

3 The Situation in North Africa (Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco)

(1) Egypt

Located at the geopolitical crossroads of the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, Egypt is a regional power in the Middle East and North Africa with a population of over 100 million. Since the terror attacks by Hamas and others on October 7, the situation between Israel and Palestine has become increasingly tense. In response to the situation, Egypt has been playing an important role in the stability of the region by evacuating foreign nationals and others from the Gaza Strip, accepting humanitarian aid supplies from international organizations and countries around the world and transporting them to the Gaza Strip. Egypt has also been engaged in diplomatic efforts such as hosting the Cairo Summit for Peace, in order to calm the situation and prevent destabilization of the entire region and has lead discussions on the urgency of improving the humanitarian situation. In the presidential election held in December, the incumbent President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi was elected to a third term with 89.6% of the total vote through public support for his response to the situation in Gaza, paving the way for a long-term administration.

In relations with Japan, Prime Minister Kishida visited Egypt in April, becoming the first Japanese prime minister in eight years to do so, and held a summit meeting with President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi, and the



Foreign Minister Hayashi attends the Third Japan-Arab Political Dialogue (September 5, Cairo, Egypt)

two sides announced they would elevate bilateral relations to a strategic partnership (See the Special Feature on page 180). In September, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Cairo, paid a courtesy call to President El-Sisi and held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry. He also took part in the Japan-Egypt-Jordan Trilateral Ministerial Consultations on the Middle East and the Third Japan-Arab Political Dialogue. In response to the worsening situation in Gaza, Prime Minister Kishida held telephone calls with President El-Sisi on October 17 and November 29, and also held the Japan-Egypt Summit Working Dinner with the Egyptian President on December 1 during the 28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28), held in the UAE. The two leaders exchanged views on bilateral relations and regional and international situations, and affirmed their close cooperation. In addition, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held telephone calls with Minister of Foreign Affairs Shoukry on October 12 and November 14, and also attended the Cairo Summit for Peace in October, which was attended by other high-level officials from major countries, and exchanged views with the summit chair, President El-Sisi.

Since April 2019, Japan has dispatched two Self-Defense Force (SDF) personnel to the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) stationed in the Sinai Peninsula, while an additional two staff officers have been dispatched since July, bringing the total to four. Japan continues to contribute to peace and stability in the region.

(2) Libya

Although Libya is an energy powerhouse boasting the greatest oil reserves in Africa, after the collapse of the Qadhafi regime in 2011, the country remains unstable with political power split between the east and the west of the country. In April 2019, Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, powerful commander of the eastern “Libyan National Army (LNA),” ordered an advance on Tripoli, leading to armed clashes. Since the two forces signed a permanent ceasefire agreement in October 2020, incidents of armed clashes between the eastern and western forces have decreased significantly. In September 2023, floods caused extensive damage, particularly in the eastern region of Derna.

On the political front, a basic agreement was reached at the United Nations-led political dialogue to hold a series of national elections, including a presidential election, on Independence Day, December 24, 2021, but these have yet to be held as of the end of 2023. Since February when Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya, Abdoulaye Bathily, announced an initiative to hold elections within 2023, efforts led by the UN have continued to progress.

In response to the floods that occurred in eastern Libya in September, Japan provided emergency relief supplies through JICA and also provided emergency grant aid totaling 3 million U.S. dollars. In addition, in light of the certain extent of improvement in the security situation, the Embassy of Japan in Libya resumed operations in Tripoli in January 2024 for the first time since it was temporarily closed in July 2014.

(3) Maghreb Countries (Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco)

The Maghreb region is of great economic importance in Africa due to its geographical advantage of being located at the junction of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, and its great potential thanks to its abundant young labor force but continues to be faced with the challenge of how to overcome increasing poverty, regional economic disparities, high unemployment rate, and the impact of soaring food prices. There are also concerns about the security implications of the flow of weapons and illegal immigrants from Libya and the Sahel region.



State Minister for Foreign Affairs Yamada, chair of the 11th Japan-Tunisia Joint Committee (June 16, Tunis, Tunisia)

In Tunisia, under the new constitution that came into effect in 2022, elections for the national assembly were held in December of that year and January 2023, and a new assembly was established. With Tunisia’s economy and finances affected by factors such as Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and climate change, attention is focused on whether the country will be able to undertake economic and social reforms.

In relations with Japan, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Yamada visited Tunisia in June and paid courtesy calls to Head of the Government Najla Bouden and Minister of Foreign Affairs Nabil Ammar. Mr. Yamada also served as the head of the Japanese delegation at the 11th Japan-Tunisia Joint Committee, where he exchanged views on general bilateral relations, the regional situation, and cooperation in the international arena. In September, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a Foreign Ministers’ Meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Ammar on the occasion of the Japan-Arab Political Dialogue in Egypt. Cooperation on the political front also progressed, with the Third Session of the Japanese-Tunisian Dialogue on Security and Counterterrorism being held in December.

In Algeria, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune newly took office in December 2019. As part of economic reforms aimed at realizing “a New Algeria« l’Algérie nouvelle»,” in 2022, he made amendments to the investment law among other changes. In November 2023, President Tebboune appointed Mr. Nadir Larbaoui as prime minister, and attention will be focused on how the administration will operate in the run-up to the president’s re-election in the upcoming election in 2024.

In relations with Japan, economic relations are expected to become stronger with the signing of the Tax Convention between Japan and Algeria in February (effective January 20, 2024), and the Agreement for Establishment of the Japan-Algeria Intergovernmental Joint Economic Committee in July. In June, the Japan-Algeria Policy Consultations were held, and in December, bilateral Consultations on Counter Terrorism and Other Related Security Matters were held for the first time in 10 years. At these meetings, the two countries exchanged views on the circumstances of their regional situations and confirmed their close cooperation within multilateral frameworks, including the UN Security Council, on which they will share seats in 2024. Moreover, bilateral relations are developing not only diplomatically but also in various other fields, such as the dispatch of fisheries experts from Japan through a JICA technical cooperation project and the participation of a Japanese film director in the Algiers International Comic Festival (Festival International de la Bande Dessinée d'Alger, FIBDA).

In Morocco, the coalition cabinet led by the leader of the National Rally of Independents (RNI), Aziz Akhannouch, which was formed following the September 2021 lower house elections, is focusing on implementing the “New Development Model”

proposed by King Mohammed VI, in addition to reforms in health, education, social security, and taxes. Furthermore, Morocco is actively working toward a transition to a green economy to deal with climate change risks such as floods and droughts. In the wake of the magnitude 6.8 earthquake that struck the mountainous region of central Morocco in September, which caused extensive damage, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) held their annual meetings in Marrakech in October, with Finance Minister SUZUKI Shunichi and Bank of Japan Governor UEDA Kazuo attending from Japan.

Regarding relations with Japan, Speaker of the House of Representatives Rachid Talbi El Alami made an official visit to Japan in March and met with members of the Diet. In September, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Nasser Bourita during the Third Japan-Arab Political Dialogue held in Egypt, and the two ministers affirmed that they would further strengthen cooperative relations between the two countries in a broad range of fields. Additionally, in response to the earthquake that occurred in central Morocco that month, Japan provided emergency humanitarian assistance totaling 3 million U.S. dollars.

COLUMN

Japanese Pop Artists Enthusiastically Celebrated in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is considered a conservative and insular major power in the Middle East, where once movies and music were banned. Now, the country is changing at a level previously unimagined, such as lifting its ban on tourism and further advancing women in society, and exchanges with Japan are becoming more active.

One such change has been the country's regular hosting of large-scale national entertainment events. In 2023, the "Jeddah Events Calendar 2023" was held in Jeddah, about an hour's drive from the Islamic holy city of Makkah ("Mecca" in English). From April to June, one event on the Calendar was the "Anime Village," an event area for experiencing Japanese culture. There, many Japanese artists gave enthusiastic performances in the evening, and young locals turned out with great excitement.

In addition, "Japan Anime Town" was established in the "Boulevard World"¹ entertainment area in the capital city of Riyadh on the occasion of the "2022 Riyadh Season." Japanese artists performed weekly here for about a month in December 2022.

A Japanese anime song singer, halca, who actually performed theme songs such as for the anime "Boruto: Naruto Next Generations" at events in Jeddah and Riyadh, offered the following about her impressions.



halca Concert in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia during Jeddah Events Calendar 2023 - Anime Village at City Walk

(Comment from halca)

The time and experiences I have had in Riyadh and Jeddah have been invaluable to me. I feel great joy and gratitude for everything that happened to me in Saudi Arabia.

Wherever I went and whoever I met, everyone had a smile, and their rich expressions of emotion came through in many ways during my live performance. Some listened with hands raised in a gentle swaying motion, some used their fingertips, palms, and entire body to make heart signs at me, and others applauded loudly when I held my notes. Everyone seemed to be enjoying the music in their own way, which was so brilliant to see.

Both Riyadh and Jeddah were filled with extremely enthusiastic cheering, which made me feel fulfilled with passionate emotion, and I still feel that this experience was such a confidence booster for me. Through my own experience, I felt the potential for people to achieve great growth by recognizing and loving each other.

The memories of everyone in Saudi Arabia who welcomed me will stay with me for a long time to come. I also want to bring these beautiful feelings and memories back to Japan and tell everyone there how wonderful Saudi Arabia and its people are. I hope that the bonds between the two countries will be strengthened by putting our thoughts and feelings into music, animation, and many other things that transcend words.

Sony Music Entertainment (Japan) Inc., which was contracted to dispatch Japanese artists to Jeddah, commented: "We are aware of the broad embrace of Japanese entertainment such as animation, games, and music in Saudi Arabia, where social and cultural liberalization has been remarkable. We hope to continue developing content and events that will please the people of Saudi Arabia."

In 2023, progress was made with political as well as cultural exchanges between the two countries. In July, Prime Minister Kishida told Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman, with whom he met in Jeddah, that he named the second chapter of the “Japan-Saudi Vision 2030,” a cooperation framework between the two countries, as “The Journey,”² and he hoped to further expand cooperation. As the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Saudi Arabia approaches in 2025, it is expected that as the two countries embark on a new journey, even more Japanese people will be able to experience the charms of this new Saudi Arabia and those exchanges will be deepened in an even wider range of fields and at an even more diverse level.



Prime Minister Kishida being greeted by Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed (July 16, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

¹ “Boulevard World” was an area that showcases the cultures and cuisines of 10 countries around the world, including Japan, and allows visitors to experience each country through restaurants, markets, and arts

² This name was inspired by the title of the animated film “The Journey,” a Japan-Saudi co-production in 2021 from a Saudi animation production company under the Misk Foundation, established by Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed, and a Japanese animation production company

COLUMN

Anecdote on Grand Egyptian Museum Construction – Airplane Etiquette Bags Sometimes Make History!

**SUZUKI Akira, JICA Expert and First Assistant Executive Director
of the Grand Egyptian Museum**

Prime Minister Abe once said that “the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) construction plan is a new landmark of friendly and cooperative relations between the two countries.” To bring about this future that he envisioned, Japan has been providing comprehensive cooperation toward the opening of the museum, including providing yen loans of approximately 84.2 billion Japanese yen (about 60% of the total construction cost) through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for the construction of GEM, providing technical cooperation for preserving and restoring collections and exhibits, exhibition methods, and museum operations, and assisting with restoring “King Khufu’s Second Solar Boat,” which will be displayed in the annex.

GEM, located about two kilometers north of the three Great Pyramids of Giza, is the largest museum in the world devoted to a single civilization (covering an area of approximately 47 hectares) and has a beautiful, modern design that is breathtaking. The exterior features a façade of translucent alabaster that changes its appearance from noon to night. Upon entering the building, visitors are greeted by the Grand Hall, which extends six-stories skyward to accommodate a colossal statue of Ramses II, who reigned about 3,200 years ago. Up the grand staircase lined



Colossal statue of Ramses II in the Grand Hall

with ancient Egyptian stone statues are the Tutankhamun Gallery, which houses the world-renowned collection of King Tutankhamun, and the permanent exhibition space, which features a collection spanning more than 3,000 years from the Old Kingdom to the Greco-Roman era. One can also enjoy a full view of the pyramids from large all-glass windows at the end of the grand staircase. What kind of architect designed such a stunning and wonderful museum worthy of displaying the greatest treasures of ancient Egypt?

More than 20 years ago, in January 2002, a museum design competition was announced to the entire world under the auspices of UNESCO. Ms. Heneghan and Mr. Peng of Dublin (Ireland) based architecture firm, heneghan peng architects, hopped on a plane to Egypt and rushed to the proposed site to conduct an inspection in preparation for submitting an application. Standing in that vast desert overlooking the pyramids of Giza, what did the two think about, what did they discuss, and what kind of design concepts did they envision? On the flight back to Dublin, they tore open a British Airways sickness bag from in front of their seats with their hands, and on it they drew a sketch of the museum design based on three axes, connecting the northern end of the proposed museum site with each summit of the three great pyramids of kings Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure, rising south of the site.

On June 2, 2003, in the following year, out of 1,557 entries from 83 countries, the up-and-coming Dublin-based heneghan peng architects won the Grand Prize, beating out a host of other world-class firms.

The “first step” of the construction of this beautiful GEM, which now soars before my eyes and fits in with the history of the pyramids of Giza, was a small drawing on an airplane sickness bag. It is a surprising and funny story worth being recorded as a part of the history behind this major museum construction project.

GEM has the attention of the world as it prepares to open. Many treasures that have never been exhibited before, including Tutankhamun’s golden masks, will be on display. I have no doubt this grand project, achieved with support from Japan, will truly build a bridge between the two countries.



heneghan peng architects’ proposed architectural design connecting the pyramids from the north end of the museum (left)
Image of the current museum taken from a drone (right)

8

Africa

2

1 Overview

Africa, with a population of over 1.4 billion in 54 countries, has been attracting attention due to its young population, rich mineral resources, and relatively high economic growth rates. On the other hand, some African countries are in serious debt, and there are many challenges to the investment environment, such as a lack of transparency in the enforcement and operation of domestic laws. At the same time, there are regions where peace and stability are threatened by conflicts, terrorism, and political turmoil, including the armed seizure of power, and they still face development challenges including serious poverty.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine continues to affect the political and social situation in Africa. Africa is also actively involved in working toward a solution, for example, by sending a head-of-state peace mission to Ukraine. Africa's presence in the international community is also increasing. For example, Egypt and Ethiopia were admitted to the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) at the BRICS Summit hosted by South Africa in August, and the accession of the African Union (AU) to the G20 was decided at the G20 Summit in New Delhi in September.

In Sudan, the fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) erupted in April, creating millions of refugees and displaced persons both inside and outside the country, resulting in a humanitarian crisis, which is also having an impact on the stability of neighboring countries that cannot be ignored. In West Africa, following Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso, a military seizure of power also occurred in Niger in July. Following the presidential election held in August in Gabon, a military seizure of power occurred,

led by the military and security forces, who claim that the results of the election were fraudulent and invalid. Food insecurity is growing in the “Horn of Africa”¹ region, where conflict and drought have caused a large number of refugees. In the Great Lakes region, particularly in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), armed groups such as the March 23 Movement (M23)² have become more active, resulting in many internally displaced persons and refugees, and a worsening human rights and humanitarian situation. Meanwhile, the presidential elections held in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Liberia, and Comoros were generally peaceful.

The year 2023 saw a flurry of high-level visits between Japan and Africa. In March, Prime Minister Kishida met with President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço of Angolan during his visit to Japan. Moreover, from April 29 to May 4, Prime Minister Kishida visited Egypt, Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique, and held meetings with the leaders of each country (See Special Feature on page 180). In May, the Joint Mission for Promoting Trade and Investment to Africa headed by State Minister for Foreign Affairs YAMADA Kenji, visited Mozambique and Mauritius. From July 31 to August 3, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited South Africa, Uganda, and Ethiopia. On the occasion of international conferences, Foreign Minister Hayashi met with the leaders and foreign ministers of Madagascar and Niger in June, and Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with the foreign minister of Sierra Leone in September. In November, Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Verónica Nataniel Macamo Dlhovo of Mozambique, who was visiting Japan. Furthermore, State Minister for Foreign Affairs HORII Iwao visited Senegal in November to

¹ The “Horn of Africa” refers to the region on the northeastern part of the African continent that protrudes in the shape of a horn toward the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. It encompasses the countries of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya.

² An armed group, which is against the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, made up of ethnic Tutsis that has been stepping up its activities in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

attend the 9th Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa, and made courtesy calls and held talks with dignitaries from Senegal, Mauritania, and Guinea-Bissau.

Furthermore, Japan invited Comoros, the chair of the AU, to the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, and in the Leaders' Joint Communiqué, the G7 leaders expressed their commitment to strengthen partnerships with African countries and to help Africa be better represented in multilateral forums.

In August, Japan organized a TICAD 30th Anniversary Event - TICAD's 30-Year History and Prospects - marking the 30th anniversary of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development

(TICAD) in Tokyo. Prime Minister Kishida issued a video message, and about 400 participants, including Foreign Minister Hayashi, members of the Diet, African embassies in Japan, and private companies, engaged in lively discussions.

The TICAD Ministerial Meeting is scheduled to be held in Tokyo in 2024, and TICAD 9 in Yokohama in 2025. Through the TICAD process, based on the achievements that TICAD has built over the past 30 years, Japan will work together in a spirit of partnership toward the co-creation of solutions to the various challenges facing Africa. Japan will also strive to further strengthen relations with African countries through investment in people and other unique Japanese initiatives.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Prime Minister Kishida's Visit to Africa

From April 29 to May 4, Prime Minister Kishida visited Egypt (North Africa), Ghana (West Africa), Kenya (East Africa), and Mozambique (Southern Africa). Prime Minister Kishida had three themes in mind during his visit to the African countries. The first was to serve as a bridge between the developing and emerging countries, known as the "Global South," and the G7; the second was to promote Japan's commitment as "a partner growing together with Africa," as expressed at the Eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 8) in August 2022; and the third was to confirm Japan's close cooperation for the stabilization of Sudan.

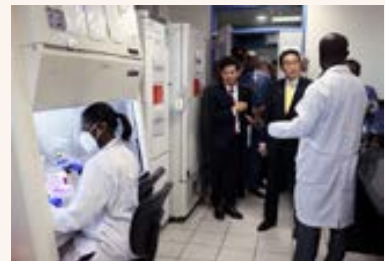
In Egypt, Prime Minister Kishida held a Summit Meeting with President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi, and the two leaders agreed to deepen bilateral relations by elevating Japan-Egypt relations to a "Strategic Partnership." Prime Minister Kishida also attended the Japan-Egypt Business Forum to encourage Japanese companies to expand their business activities into Egypt. He also visited the League of Arab States headquarters, the first visit by a Japanese Prime Minister, and affirmed that Japan and the Arab world will deepen cooperation to maintain and strengthen the international order based on the rule of law.

In Ghana, Prime Minister Kishida held a Summit Meeting with President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo. Prime Minister Kishida asserted that no unilateral change of the status quo by force is tolerated in any region in the world, and the two leaders shared the view on the importance of free and open international order based on the rule of law. In addition, the two leaders reaffirmed the enhancement of bilateral relations through efforts in the health sector and in the international arena. Prime Minister Kishida also expressed his commitment to provide approximately 500 million U.S. dollars over the next three years to contribute to peace and stability and promote sustainable growth in the Sahel region and the neighboring coastal countries of the Gulf of Guinea.

He also visited the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, which Japan has supported for many years.



Prime Minister Kishida visiting the Grand Egyptian Museum (April 30, Cairo, Egypt; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)



Prime Minister Kishida visiting the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (May 1, Accra, Ghana; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

In Kenya, Prime Minister Kishida held a Summit Meeting with President William Samoei Ruto, who has shown active leadership both in terms of regional peace and stability and in the international arena. The two leaders shared the view to cooperate toward stabilizing the situation in Sudan, and, with Russia's aggression in Ukraine in mind, to work together for the promotion of the rule of law. They also confirmed cooperation in various infrastructure project plans in Mombasa, a logistics hub in East Africa, under the new plan for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)."

In Mozambique, Prime Minister Kishida held a Summit Meeting with President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi in which the two leaders shared the view to push for the early resumption of Africa's largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) development project. The two leaders also affirmed that they would cooperate to encourage the realization of tangible business results by taking advantage of the Public and Private Sector Joint Mission for Promoting Trade and Investment in Africa that was dispatched in conjunction with the visit. President Nyusi expressed his hope that Japan, as the G7 Presidency, would address various issues in Africa through collaboration between the G7 and the African Union (AU).

During Prime Minister Kishida's visit to these four countries, which are major economic centers in Africa, Japan was able to further strengthen bilateral relations with each country while holding a series of substantive discussions based on the three themes.

2023 marks 30 years since TICAD was established under the leadership of the Government of Japan. Based on the achievements accumulated to date, the TICAD Ministerial Meeting is scheduled to be held in Tokyo in 2024, and TICAD 9 in Yokohama in 2025. Taking advantage of these opportunities, Japan will continue to work together with Africa on various issues from the same perspective.



Japan-Kenya Summit Meeting
(May 3, Nairobi, Kenya; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)



Japan-Mozambique Summit Meeting (May 4, Maputo, Mozambique; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

2 East Africa

(1) Uganda

Under President Yoweri Museveni's long-serving administration, Uganda has enjoyed economic growth owing to its stable domestic politics. The country is actively accepting refugees from neighboring countries, and currently hosts approximately 1.5 million refugees, the largest number in Africa. It is also contributing to regional stability by deploying its own army to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS)³ and to the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where armed groups are active.

In August, Foreign Minister Hayashi became the first Japanese foreign minister to visit the country,



Japan-Uganda Foreign Ministers' Meeting (August 2, Kampala, Uganda)

paying a courtesy call to President Museveni and meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeje Abubakhar Odongo. During the courtesy call and meeting, the two countries affirmed to further strengthen bilateral

³ African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS): Established in March 2021 with the approval of the UN Security Council, ATMIS restructured the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to facilitate a transition to a system in which the Somali government takes responsibility for maintaining security.

relations and to continue to work together on various issues facing the international community.

(2) Ethiopia

Ethiopia has the second largest population in Africa (120 million people) and high economic potential, with a high annual growth rate of around 8% from 2004 to 2019 (approximately 6% since 2020).

Armed clashes that occurred between the federal government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) continued from November 2020, but the situation has improved since the November 2022 peace agreement. Meanwhile, in the Amhara region, where the armed forces and the government have been fighting since April 2023, the conflict intensified in August, and the government declared a state of emergency in the region.

In August, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited the country, paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Ahmed Ali Abiy and met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mekonnen Hassen Demeke. They confirmed future cooperation in addressing various issues in the international community, including bilateral cooperation in the economic field and ensuring food security in Africa.



Japan-Ethiopia Foreign Ministers' Meeting (August 3, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)

(3) Eritrea

Eritrea is a country located on the international strait connecting the Indian Ocean, the Suez Canal, and Europe. Its territorial waters are a crossroads in terms of economic security, with many Japanese-related ships passing through them. Eritrea's role in the stability of the "Horn of Africa" region is important, and in FY 2024 Japan will upgrade its consulate in Eritrea to an embassy.

(4) Kenya

Kenya is an important like-minded country for Japan that shares fundamental values and principles such as democracy and the rule of law. Kenya has been actively involved in the peace and stability of East Africa, including through its efforts to resolve conflicts in Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Kenya is also the economic hub of East Africa and one of the leading hubs of Japanese companies in Africa. In 2023, the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Japan, Prime Minister Kishida visited Kenya in May and held a summit meeting with President William Samoei Ruto to discuss issues challenging the international community, including Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the situation in Sudan. They also shared the view to further develop bilateral relations, including business relations. In February 2024, President Ruto visited Japan and held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Kishida, where the two leaders shared the view to further strengthen economic relations, promote a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)", and enhance cooperation in the international arena.

(5) Union of Comoros

The Union of Comoros is Japan's partner and supports FOIP as a maritime nation like Japan. In 2023, as the chair of the AU, the country has been active in diplomatic efforts. Japan invited the country, as chair of the AU, to the G7 Hiroshima Summit, which it hosted in May, and President Assoumani Azali contributed to the discussions. At the Japan-Comoros summit held on that occasion, the two countries affirmed cooperation on FOIP and the AU's participation as a permanent member of the G20.

(6) Djibouti

Djibouti is an important partner in FOIP because it is located on an international shipping route that connects the Indian Ocean with the Suez Canal and Europe and is used by many Japanese vessels. Japan has had a Self-Defense Forces (SDF) base here since 2011 and has been engaged in anti-piracy operations. The base was also used to evacuate Japanese nationals and others when clashes broke out in Sudan in April. State Minister for Foreign Affairs TAKEI Shunsuke, who was

dispatched to handle the evacuation, expressed gratitude for Djibouti's full cooperation in the evacuation in his meeting with Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Mohamad Ali Hassan, and both affirmed their commitment to continue deepening Japan-Djibouti relations towards the realization of FOIP.

In December, Japan signed and exchanged new notes with the Djibouti government to enable the SDF of Japan to secure, in an appropriate manner, the status of the SDF in Djibouti for the protection and transportation of Japanese and other nationals abroad and for the development of a temporary posture for the possibility of such measures.

(7) Sudan

In April, fighting broke out in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, and the fighting spread to other parts of the country. More than six million people have been displaced both inside and outside the country, creating a humanitarian crisis in Sudan and neighboring countries. The United States (U.S.), Saudi Arabia and other countries, regional organizations such as the AU and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), as well as the UN, are continuing to mediate efforts to achieve a ceasefire, but a lasting ceasefire is yet to be achieved. Japan has provided assistance totaling 92 million U.S. dollars to address humanitarian issues in Sudan and neighboring countries and is supporting efforts to address various issues together with regional organizations such as IGAD and the AU, as well as international organizations such as the UN.

(8) Seychelles

Seychelles is located at a strategic point in the Indian Ocean and is an important partner for Japan in realizing FOIP. It is an island nation renowned for tourism and rich fishery resources and boasts the highest GDP per capita in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, it is susceptible to the effects of climate change and is vulnerable as a small island nation. Until now, the Embassy of Japan in Kenya was accredited to Seychelles and had a dual-role consulate in the country, but in January 2024 it was upgraded to the Embassy of Japan in Seychelles.

(9) Somalia

The humanitarian situation in Somalia remains severe due to factors such as intermittent terrorist activities by the radical Islamist group Al-Shabaab and drought. Japan has been supporting the efforts of President Sheikh Mohamud Hassan, who took office in May 2022, toward the consolidation of peace, and in 2023, provided humanitarian assistance totaling approximately 27 million U.S. dollars in various areas, including food, health, and medical care, through international organizations.

(10) Tanzania

Tanzania is located in a strategic position connecting eastern and southern Africa and continues to experience economic growth thanks to its stable domestic politics. Under President Suluhu Hassan Samia, who took office in April 2021, the country is also working to attract investment and develop large-scale infrastructure such as railways and ports.

The First Japan-Tanzania Business Environment Improvement Committee was held in May, where discussions were held toward facilitating investment and trade between the two countries.

(11) Burundi

Burundi is a landlocked country located in the central part of the African continent. Under President Évariste Ndayishimiye, who took office in May 2020, Burundi is accelerating efforts to fight corruption and improve relations with neighboring countries. Japan has been providing ongoing development cooperation to Burundi since the 1970s and continues to provide support for infrastructure development and the improvement of basic social services.

(12) Madagascar

Madagascar is an island country in the Indian Ocean located off the southeastern coast of Africa that supports FOIP. It is also an important country as a supplier of mineral resources. In June, Foreign Minister Hayashi paid a courtesy call on President Andry Nirina Rajoelina during his visit to France and discussed bilateral cooperation, including an integrated nickel-cobalt production project run by a Japanese company, as well as strengthening food security. A presidential election

was held in November in which President Rajoelina was re-elected.

(13) South Sudan

South Sudan has been in turmoil since clashes that broke out between the government and anti-government groups in December 2013, but the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) was signed in September 2018. As the deadline for the implementation of this agreement approaches in February 2025, delays have been seen in the drafting of a constitution, preparation for elections, and so on.

Japan continues to support the peace and stability of the country through development cooperation through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and support for UN Peacekeeping Operations (PKO). In December, Japan decided to provide approximately 12 million U.S. dollars in assistance via international organizations for areas such as ceasefire monitoring, election assistance, and humanitarian assistance.

(14) Mauritius

Mauritius is a maritime nation like Japan and is an important partner in realizing FOIP. In March, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Yamada met with Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade Alan Ganoo at the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting. In May, the Public and Private Sector Joint Mission for Promoting Trade and Investment in Africa, headed by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Yamada, visited Mauritius. In September, Prime Minister Kishida held a brief talk with Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth and agreed to develop bilateral relations, including trade and investment.

(15) Rwanda

Under the leadership of President Paul Kagame, Rwanda has continued its efforts toward economic development and national reconciliation. The country aims to become an ICT-based nation and has been experiencing rapid development, particularly in the field of information and communications technology, and the number of Japanese companies, including startups, entering the country is increasing. Japan is contributing to the digitalization of the country,

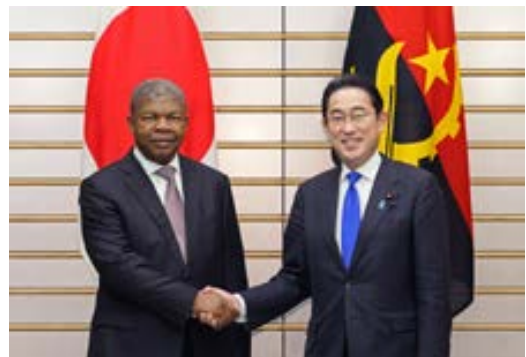
including providing grant aid for the introduction of an intelligent transport system in the country's capital, Kigali, in October. Japan and Rwanda are also cooperating in the space industry, including launching satellites and training engineers through industry-government-academia collaboration.

3 Southern Africa

(1) Angola

Angola has a stable political foundation and plays an important role in regional peace and stability through active multilateral diplomacy. It is one of the leading oil-producing countries in Africa and is rich in mineral resources such as diamonds. President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço is actively working to improve the business environment and promote domestic industry to diversify and stabilize the economy.

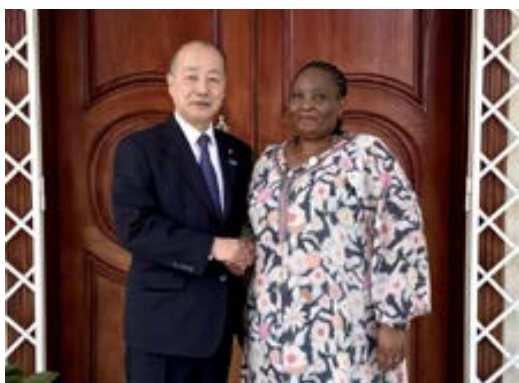
In March, President Lourenço made an official working visit to Japan and attended the Japan-Angola Business Forum. During his meeting with Prime Minister Kishida, the two leaders discussed strengthening business relations and Russia's aggression against Ukraine and affirmed the importance of transparent and fair development finance. During his visit to Angola in August, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, NISHIMURA Yasutoshi, signed the Japan-Angola Investment Agreement and attended the Japan-Angola Business Roundtable.



Japan-Angola Summit Meeting (March 13, Tokyo, Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

(2) Eswatini

Eswatini maintains the only absolute monarchy in Africa under King Mswati III.



Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Takagi meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Thulisile Dladla of Eswatini (February 16, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)

In April 2018, the country changed its name from the “Kingdom of Swaziland” to the “Kingdom of Eswatini.” It is the only country in Africa that has diplomatic relations with Taiwan. In February, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs TAKAGI Kei met with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Thulisile Dladla during his visit to Ethiopia. Parliamentary elections were held in October and the King appointed a new prime minister and cabinet members.

(3) Zambia

Zambia, which has abundant mineral resources including copper, defaulted on its debts in November 2020, but in June 2023, it reached a general agreement on a debt restructuring plan with a committee of official creditors under the common G20 framework. Its domestic politics remains stable, and the country is strengthening its ties with Western countries, including co-hosting the second Summit for Democracy with the U.S. as Africa’s representative in March. In July, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan and high officials of Zambia exchanged views, and Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Nishimura visited the country in August and paid a courtesy call on President Hakainde Hichilema.

(4) Zimbabwe

In August, Zimbabwe held general elections, including a presidential election, for the first time in five years. Japan provided election-related equipment and training through a grant assistance program called the Election Assistance Program (UNDP partnership),

thereby contributing to the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law in the country. Incumbent President Emmerson Mnangagwa was re-elected, and a new cabinet was formed, but some international election observers, including the European Union, have expressed concern about the fairness of the election. The U.S. and Europe continue to impose sanctions, including asset freezes and travel bans on certain companies and individuals. The new government faces challenges in managing the economy, including dealing with prolonged inflation and excess debt.

(5) Namibia

Namibia has been politically stable since its independence in 1990. It is an important logistics hub on the Atlantic side of the Southern African region with abundant marine and mineral resources. It also ranked first in Africa in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index. In April, Minister of Mines and Energy Tom Alweendo visited Japan. In June, a Japanese business mission visited Namibia. In August, Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry Nishimura became the first Japanese cabinet minister to visit Namibia, where he affirmed that Japan would further strengthen and develop bilateral relations.

(6) Botswana

Botswana has been politically stable since gaining independence in 1966. Economically, the country has grown rapidly since independence thanks to revenues from diamonds and other minerals and is now classified as an upper-middle-income country. Meanwhile, President Mokgweetsi Masisi is aiming to transition to a knowledge-intensive economy with diversified industries. In February, Japan and Botswana signed an exchange of notes for the Emergency Support Project in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis, which will provide financial support towards economic and social stabilization and the transition to a green economy.

(7) Malawi

Malawi has maintained stable domestic affairs since its independence in 1964. However, in recent years, the economy has become unstable due to floods and foreign currency shortages. The country is currently working on disaster recovery, fiscal reconstruction, and

agricultural industrialization. Japan has built friendly relations with Malawi, with which it shares fundamental values, and provided emergency relief goods through JICA in response to the flood and landslide damage caused by Cyclone Freddy, which struck the southern part of the country in March.

(8) South Africa

South Africa has demonstrated its presence in the international arena through its participation in the G20 and BRICS, and through the efforts of African leaders in the Ukraine peace initiative. It is also a major economic power in Africa and continues to attract interest from foreign companies, including Japanese, as a base for expanding business operations. In June, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a telephone call with Naledi Pandor, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation. In August, he visited South Africa and held a foreign ministers' meeting in which the two countries affirmed to strengthen bilateral relations and cooperate in the international arena. In the energy and mining sector, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Yamada visited the country in February to participate in the Mineral Security Partnership. In September, upon Minister of Higher Education and Training Bonginkosi Emmanuel Nzimande's visit to Japan, the two governments concluded a memorandum of cooperation on matters related to hydrogen and ammonia.



Japan-South Africa Foreign Ministers' Meeting (August 1, Pretoria, South Africa)

(9) Mozambique

Mozambique is an important partner for FOIP and has been a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council with Japan since 2023.

In May, Prime Minister Kishida visited Mozambique with the Public and Private Sector Joint Mission for Promoting Trade and Investment in Africa, led by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Yamada, and held a summit meeting with President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi. The two governments agreed to provide strong support for the early resumption of the liquefied natural gas development project in the north of the country. In October, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs HOSAKA Yasushi visited the country to attend the inauguration ceremony for the Nacala Port project, which Japan provided support for through yen loans, and paid a courtesy call on President Nyusi. In November, Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Verónica Nataníel Macamo Dlhovo, who was visiting Japan, and confirmed the importance of multifaceted development that will lead to growth in the entire northern region of the country, including using the Co-creation for Common Agenda Initiative, as well as the promotion of issues such as "Women, Peace and Security (WPS)".

(10) Lesotho

In Lesotho, a landlocked country composed of mostly mountainous highlands, trout aquaculture is conducted in the lake of the Katse Dam constructed by utilizing natural resources, providing a major export product to Japan. In addition to improving the food situation through food aid, Japan is also supporting the improvement of the country's energy supply by upgrading the Katse Dam's small hydroelectric power generation facilities and increasing the country's power generation capacity through renewable energy.

4 Central Africa

(1) Gabon

Following the presidential election held in August, members of the military and security forces claimed that the election results were fraudulent and invalid, and declared the dissolution of state institutions, installing General Brice Oligi Nguema as the interim president and non-military member Raymond Ndong Sima as appointed prime minister. The interim government has pledged to hold democratic and fair elections

and a national referendum to adopt a new constitution and is working to eliminate corruption and strengthen press freedom.

(2) Cameroon

The Government of Cameroon continues to make efforts to resolve the issue in English-speaking regions, where clashes between separatists and security forces persist. Japan exchanged notes for the second phase of the Recovery in South-West region of Cameroon through rehabilitation of health centers and water points (in cooperation with UNDP, with a grant amount of 300 million Japanese yen) in March and for food aid (grant aid of 200 million Japanese yen) through the UN World Food Programme (WFP) in September, contributing to strengthening peace and stability in Cameroon.

In the senate elections held in March, the ruling party, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), led by President Paul Biya, won 94 out of 100 seats, maintaining a strong administration.

(3) Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo held a presidential election on December 20th, marking the final year of President Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo's first term. Japan provided support to ensure that the election was held in an inclusive and safe manner.

In the eastern region, the human rights and humanitarian situation has deteriorated significantly as armed groups have become more active, resulting in many internally displaced persons and refugees. Against this backdrop, the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has requested the early withdrawal of the UN PKO mission deployed in the country. The international community has pointed out the importance of realistic and concrete measures for the gradual, responsible, and sustainable withdrawal of the UN PKO mission, and stressed the need to strengthen governance in the country, including security sector reforms. Japan is collaborating with international organizations to provide assistance through the reestablishment of a local policing model.

In addition, the country has an abundance of important mineral, forest, and water resources, and Japan is promoting cooperation for the country's socioeconomic

development, including the use of resources and assistance in the field of electric power infrastructure.

(4) Republic of Congo

In June, the Republic of Congo participated in a peace mission to Ukraine and Russia, which was led by seven African leaders. The country, which is home to the vast Congo Basin, has also been active in addressing climate change and has been involved in regional and international issues, including hosting the Summit of the Three Basins, Biodiversity Ecosystems, and Tropical Forests in October.

On the other hand, the domestic economy has been sluggish due to Russia's aggression against Ukraine and other factors, making economic diversification a priority issue, and Japan has provided food aid to the country through the WFP. In October, Denis Christel Sassou N'Gusso, Minister of International Cooperation and Promotion of Public/Private Partnership, visited Japan and met with Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs FUKAZAWA Yoichi in which both sides welcomed the consent in principle recently reached on the technical cooperation agreement between the two governments. Both sides also mutually affirmed that they would make further efforts to strengthen bilateral relations through exchange of views among public and private stakeholders of both countries.

(5) Sao Tome and Principe

In Sao Tome and Principe, where poverty rates are high, President Carlos Manuel Vila Nova is working to diversify the economy to reduce poverty. Japan has been providing food aid and is the second largest donor after Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe's former colonial power. The counterpart funds for food aid are used for the country's economic and social development.

(6) Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea remains under the long-running administration of President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, who was re-elected in the presidential election in November 2022. In February, cases of Marburg virus disease were confirmed in the continental Equatorial Guinea, but in June, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared an end to Marburg virus disease in the country.

(7) Chad

In Chad, a national referendum on a new constitution was held in December, and there has been progress toward the transition to civilian rule. Following clashes that erupted in Sudan in April, the country has accepted more than 400,000 Sudanese refugees. In May, Japan decided to provide assistance to refugees and returnees in countries neighboring Sudan, including Chad, and provided humanitarian assistance to Chad. Japan values and encourages the role that Chad plays in peace and stability in the Sahel and Lake Chad regions and supports it by providing food aid and other assistance.

(8) Central African Republic

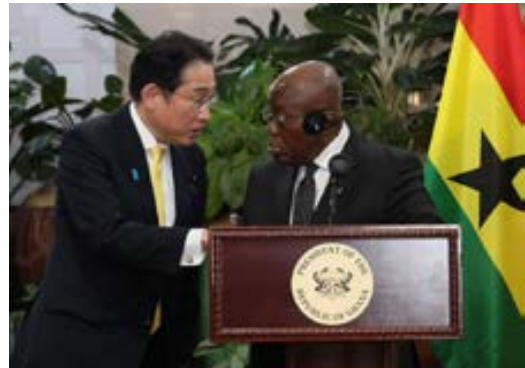
The Central African Republic is moving forward with its domestic peace process, including dismantling five domestic armed groups in April. However, the country continues to face humanitarian challenges with a large number of refugees and internally displaced persons. In September, Japan exchanged notes regarding food aid (250 million Japanese yen) through the WFP and continues to provide humanitarian assistance to the country.

A referendum on the new draft constitution was held in July, and in August the Constitutional Court in the Central African Republic declared its adoption by a majority vote.

5 West Africa

(1) Ghana

The Akufo-Addo administration, which was launched in 2017 and re-elected for a second term from 2021, has adopted the concept of Ghana Beyond Aid and is working to promote investment and diversify industries. In addition, the country continues to focus on rebuilding the domestic economy, including the debt situation. In May, Prime Minister Kishida visited Ghana, becoming the first Japanese prime minister in 17 years to do so, and held a summit meeting with President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo and visited the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, which Japan has supported for many years through ODA. The institute plays an important role in the fight against infectious diseases in the region. In February,



Joint press conference following the Japan-Ghana Summit Meeting (May 1, Accra, Ghana; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

Foreign Minister Hayashi held talks with Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration Kwaku Ampratwum-Sarpong.

(2) Cabo Verde

Cabo Verde has a well-established democracy with high political stability among African countries. In January, Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Regional Integration Rui Alberto de Figueiredo Soares in New York, U.S., and the two shared the view to strengthen bilateral cooperation. Furthermore, Japan implements economic development cooperation with the country, including exchanging notes regarding grant aid for food aid in September.



Japan-Cabo Verde Foreign Ministers' Meeting (January 12, New York, U.S.)

(3) The Gambia

Since President Adama Barrow took office in 2017, the Gambia has been promoting reforms based on fundamental values and principles, such as democracy and the rule of law. However, it faces social issues such as a fragile economic structure dependent on agriculture

and serious poverty. Japan is contributing to the stabilization of the country through food aid.

(4) Guinea

In Guinea, after the military takeover by a group of Guinean army soldiers in September 2021, a transitional government (led by interim President Mamadi Doumbouya) was established, and the transition to civilian rule is underway with a completion deadline of the end of 2024.

Guinea has abundant water resources and fertile land, has high development potential for agriculture and fisheries, and is a major producer of bauxite and iron.

Japan has built friendly relations with Guinea over the years and provides assistance to the country in areas such as food security, development of economic infrastructure, and improvement of basic social services to promote sustainable development.

(5) Guinea-Bissau

Guinea-Bissau aims to overcome poverty and political instability by taking advantage of its fertile lands, blessed with fishery and mineral resources. In June, Guinea-Bissau held peaceful elections for its National People's Assembly and inaugurated a new prime minister, Geraldo Martins. Japan continues to provide assistance to Guinea-Bissau, including in the form of institution-building, to strengthen the rule of law and democratic governance. At the Dakar International Forum on Peace and Stability in Africa held in Senegal in November, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Horii paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Martins and the two countries shared the view to further strengthen relations.

(6) Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire is working to promote and strengthen its agricultural production system under its National Development Plan. To support this, Japan exchanged notes in April regarding two grant aid projects for the Economic and Social Development Programme worth a total of 1.15 billion Japanese yen, which will involve the provision of agricultural engineering equipment and fertilizer. In June, Japan exchanged notes regarding grant aid for the Project for the Improvement of Mechanized Services in the Rice Cultivation Sector.

Furthermore, in response to the lack of public services and the increasing influx of refugees in the northern region, Japan exchanged notes with Côte d'Ivoire in October regarding the Local Government Social Infrastructure Improvement Plan in the Northern Region (in cooperation with UNDP). In February, Chief Executive Officer of the Investment Promotion Center Solange Amichia visited Japan and met with Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Takagi, where they discussed promoting investment by Japanese companies in Côte d'Ivoire, and shared the view to continue active discussions through the Bilateral Committee on the Improvement of the Business Environment and other means.

(7) Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, presidential elections were held in June, and President Julius Maada Bio was re-elected for a second term. The Bio administration is focused on building a stable, peaceful, open and pluralistic democracy, and continues to work on priority areas such as food security, human resources development, youth support, and technology promotion. Japan implements development cooperation with the country in areas such as health, human resources development, agriculture, and basic infrastructure development. In September, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Timothy Musa Kabba in New York, U.S., and confirmed cooperation in the international arena.



Foreign Minister Kamikawa meets with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Kabba of Sierra Leone (September 19, New York, U.S.)

(8) Senegal

As the stabilizing force in Western Africa, President Macky Sall has been actively working toward peace and stability in Africa, participating in the Ukrainian peace mission to Ukraine and Russia in June, and hosting the 9th Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa in November. On the domestic political front, President Sall announced his intention not to run in the next presidential election scheduled for February 2024, in accordance with the provisions of the constitution, once again demonstrating to the international community that Senegal is a country where government is administered according to the constitution and democracy is firmly established.

At the Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa in November, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan Horii introduced Japan's efforts to promote peace and stability in Africa and underlined that Japan would think together with Africa and work as a partner to co-create better solutions, given the increasing role of African countries in the international community. He also paid a courtesy call on President Sall and met with Foreign Minister Ismaïla Madior Fall and affirmed that they would work together to further strengthen bilateral cooperation and Japan-Africa relations, as well as to strengthen cooperation in the international arena.

(9) Togo

In April, in order to improve food security and resolve development issues in Togo, Japan exchanged notes regarding the grant aid Economic and Social Development Programme, which provides fertilizer, the price of which has risen sharply due to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Japan and Togo also exchanged notes in September regarding food aid. Furthermore, in order to support Togo in its efforts to become a regional logistics hub by developing logistics corridors, Japan exchanged notes with Togo in November regarding the grant aid Project for Construction of Bypass Road at Sokodé.

(10) Nigeria

The presidential election in February resulted in the election of Bola Tinubu from the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), the first change in presidents in eight

years. Japanese House of Representatives member TANAKA Kazunori, as Special Envoy of the Prime Minister, attended the presidential inauguration ceremony in May. The new president's basic policies include governance based on the constitution and the rule of law, security measures, eradicating poverty, job creation, improved access to capital, and fighting corruption. Of note, soon after taking office he embarked on economic reforms, including the abolition of fuel subsidies that had been putting pressure on the country's finances for many years.

In terms of security, terrorist attacks and raids by groups such as Boko Haram continue, particularly in the northeast. Japan is carrying out economic and social development assistance, as well as humanitarian assistance through international organizations.

(11) Niger

Niger is facing the growing threat of terrorism primarily on its borders with Mali and Burkina Faso, and was making sustained efforts to counter terrorism and overcome development challenges in cooperation with the international community, under the leadership of President Mohamed Bazoum. However, in July, the detention of President Bazoum by members of Niger's Armed Forces army soldiers occurred. Japan strongly condemned the action by the soldiers, and a Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson issued a statement calling for the safety of President Bazoum and for the constitutional order to be upheld. Japan will continue to support diplomatic efforts by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the AU, among others, to ensure the safety of President Bazoum and the early restoration of constitutional order.

(12) Burkina Faso

Following the seizure of power by members of Burkina Faso's Armed Forces in January and September 2022, a transitional government, led by President of the Transition Ibrahim Traoré, was established and is working toward the transition to a civilian government. The security situation in Burkina Faso is seriously deteriorating, with frequent terrorist attacks and raids mainly in the border areas with Mali and Niger in the north, and a large number of internally displaced persons have

been reported. Ensuring peace and stability in Burkina Faso, which is the linchpin for peace and stability in the Sahel region and the countries along the Gulf of Guinea, has become an urgent issue.

To contribute to the improvement of the humanitarian situation, Japan exchanged notes with Burkina Faso, regarding grant assistance for food aid in October and is providing food aid with Japanese government rice to improve food security in the country and is also promoting cooperation regarding assistance for internally displaced persons.

(13) Benin

Considering the urgent need to strengthen security measures in northern Benin due to the southward movement of terrorist organizations resulting from instability in the Sahel region, Japan exchanged notes in October regarding grant aid for the Economic and Social Development Programme and decided to provide anti-terrorism and security equipment. Romuald Wadagni, Minister of Economy and Finance, visited Japan in June and met with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Yamada, during which the two countries shared the view to further develop bilateral relations and to work toward peace and stability in the Sahel region and the countries along the Gulf of Guinea.

(14) Mali

Following the seizure of power by Malian army soldiers in August 2020 and May 2021, a transitional government, led by President of the Transition Assimi Goïta, was established and is working toward the transition to civilian rule. The security and humanitarian situation have deeply deteriorated, with frequent terrorist attacks, raids, and clashes occurring mainly in the north and east of the country. In June, in response to a request for withdrawal from the Mali transitional government, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution to withdraw the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Ensuring peace and stability in Mali, which is the linchpin for peace and stability in

the Sahel region and the countries along the Gulf of Guinea, has become an urgent issue.

Japan supports peace, stability, and sustainable growth in Mali. In October, Japan exchanged notes on the grant assistance for The Project for the Promotion of Education for Children Based on the ‘School for All’ Model in Vulnerable Areas (in collaboration with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)) and is working with UNICEF to promote primary education enrollment and improvement of the learning environment in Mali.

(15) Liberia

President George Tawlon Manneh Oppong Weah is focusing on reducing poverty in Liberia, following the civil war that broke out in 1989 and the Ebola hemorrhagic fever that spread from neighboring countries in 2014, causing enormous humanitarian damage in Liberia. Infrastructure, education, and health are also priorities, and Japan is supporting the country’s sustainable growth through assistance for the expansion and upgrade of the main road (Japan Freeway) in the capital Monrovia and food aid. The first round of the presidential election was held in October, and a runoff election was held in November, in which the former vice-president candidate, Joseph Nyumah Boakai, was elected.

(16) Mauritania

While being located in the Sahel region, where politics and security are becoming increasingly unstable, there have been no terrorist attacks since 2011 in Mauritania, and its government continues to be relatively stable. However, food shortages are becoming severe due to factors such as the global situation and the increase in the influx of refugees caused by the worsening security situation in neighboring countries. Japan continues to provide assistance, including food aid. In addition to its long-standing cooperation in the fisheries sector, Japan is also supporting the country’s development through cooperation in the agricultural sector.

Chapter 3

Diplomacy to Defend National Interests through Co-creation with the World

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1

Efforts for Peace and Stability of Japan and the International Community

1 National Security Initiatives

(1) Security Environment Surrounding Japan

Today, Japan's security environment is as severe and complex as it has ever been since the end of World War II. Military build-up, including nuclear and missile capabilities, is advancing rapidly around Japan. Further reinforcement of military capabilities and acceleration of military activities are becoming more prominent, and unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force are occurring more frequently than ever before. A historic shift in the power balance and geopolitical competition are intensifying particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, with some countries in the international community attempting to change the existing international order based on their own historical views and values. Russia started its aggression against Ukraine in February 2022. In the maritime domain, there have been cases where a country unilaterally claims its entitlements or takes actions, based on assertions that are incompatible with the existing international order. These have generated undue infringement of the principles such as freedom of navigation and overflight in the high seas.

Under these circumstances, grey zone situations over territories, cross-border cyberattacks on critical civilian infrastructures, and information warfare in the cognitive dimension through information manipulation, including spread of disinformation, are constant occurrences in the international community, thereby further blurring the boundary between contingency and peacetime. Furthermore, the scope of security has expanded to include those fields previously considered non-military such as economic, technological and others, and thus the boundary between military and non-military fields has become blurred. In addition, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and

ballistic missiles, as well as responding to international terrorism, continue to pose serious challenges to the international community. In light of these developments, it is now necessary to strengthen efforts related to security policies across diverse sectors.

In December 2022, Japan formulated a new National Security Strategy (NSS), along with the National Defense Strategy and Defense Buildup Program. While the NSS sets forth a wide range of security measures (fundamental reinforcement of defense capabilities, including possession of counterstrike capabilities; reinforcement of comprehensive defense architecture; consideration of revisions to the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology and its Implementation Guidelines; consideration of the introduction of active cyber defense; significant reinforcement of maritime security capabilities and expansion of systems; promotion of economic security policies, among others), it establishes diplomatic capability first among the main elements of comprehensive national power for Japan's national security. Based on this document, Japan will continue to develop a strong diplomacy, to prevent crises before they occur, and to proactively create a peaceful and stable international environment.

Furthermore, the NSS also notes that the transfer of defense equipment and technology overseas serves as a key policy instrument to create a desirable security environment for Japan, and to provide assistance to countries that are subject to aggression in violation of international law. From this perspective, the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology and its Implementation Guidelines were partially revised in December 2023 to enable the transfer of defense equipment and technology in a wide range of fields, and at the same time, to conduct more strict examinations on transfers.

(2) Enforcement of the “Legislation for Peace and Security,” and Initiatives Based on the Legislation

In order to adapt to the changes in the security environment surrounding Japan and to secure the lives and peaceful livelihood of its people, it is important to advance vibrant diplomacy to create a peaceful, stable, and prosperous international environment. In addition, it is important to enable seamless responses to any situation, and to contribute even more proactively to the peace and stability of the international community based on the principle of international cooperation. To achieve these objectives, the “Legislation for Peace and Security” took effect in March 2016.

After the enforcement of the legislation, Japan has been engaged in various forms of cooperation with the U.S. and other relevant countries. The Japan-U.S. Alliance is stronger than it has ever been, and Japan is contributing further to peace and stability in the region and the international community. For example, from 2017 to the end of 2022, Japan escorted the U.S. Forces and other troops a total of 110 times on occasions such as joint exercises, intelligence and surveillance operations, including ballistic missile warnings. In November 2022, Japan also conducted escort operations in cooperation with the U.S. and Australia for the first time. In addition, Japan has also expanded and enhanced activities relating to cooperation on international peace and cooperation, such as UN Peacekeeping operations (PKO).

Since the enforcement of the “Legislation for Peace and Security,” Japan has been deepening cooperation not only with the U.S., but also with various other countries. Going forward, MOFA will strive to maintain and develop diplomatic relations that further advance mutual cooperation with other countries, with a view to securing the lives and peaceful livelihood of the people of Japan.

(3) Territorial Integrity

Maintaining territorial integrity is a fundamental responsibility of the Government. Japan’s policy to resolutely protect its land, sea and air space remains unchanged. Japan will continue to maintain its stance of responding firmly but in a calm manner. Based on this, the relevant government agencies are working

in close cooperation to advance measures to ensure a seamless and adequate response to any form of unlawful acts. At the same time, the Government of Japan engages in proactive efforts to promote awareness of Japan’s position on territorial integrity among the international community, making use of the contacts and knowledge of its diplomatic missions overseas.

2 Japan-U.S. Security Arrangements

(1) Overview of Japan-U.S. Security Relationship

Under the security environment surrounding Japan, which is becoming increasingly severe at an ever more rapid pace, it is indispensable to strengthen the Japan-U.S. Security Arrangements and to enhance the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance not only for the peace and security of Japan, but also for the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific region. Japan and the U.S. are further enhancing their deterrence and response capabilities under the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation (“The Guidelines”) and the Legislation for Peace and Security. Through such efforts, Japan and the U.S. have been expanding and strengthening cooperation in a wide range of areas, including missile defense, cyberspace, space and information security. While advancing these efforts, Japan and the U.S. have concurrently been working closely on the realignment of U.S. Forces in Japan, including the relocation of Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma and of approximately 9,000 U.S. Marine Corps in Okinawa to Guam and other locations in order to mitigate the impact on local communities, including Okinawa.

(2) Japan-U.S. Security and Defense Cooperation in Various Fields

A An Overview of Japan-U.S. Security and Defense Cooperation

The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation, which were formulated in 2015, reviewed and updated the general framework and policy direction of Japan-U.S. defense cooperation. Through the Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM) and other efforts

established under these Guidelines, Japan and the U.S. have been sharing information closely, establishing a common understanding of the situation, and engaging in “seamless” responses and efforts from peacetime to contingencies. From its inauguration till now, the Biden administration has consistently made it clear that it places great importance on the Japan- U.S. Alliance.

In January, the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (Japan-U.S. “2+2”) was convened in Washington, D.C. (U.S.) in a timely manner, immediately after the release of strategic documents by the two countries. The meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Hayashi and Defense Minister HAMADA Yasukazu from the Japanese side, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin from the U.S. side. The two sides welcomed the release of their respective National Security Strategies and National Defense Strategies, and confirmed unprecedented alignment of their vision, priorities, and goals, and discussed measures to maximize Alliance deterrence and response capabilities under their strategies. On top of that, in the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting held in the same month, President Joseph Biden reiterated his unwavering commitment to the defense of Japan. The two leaders also welcomed the national security strategies of the two countries are aligned with each other and renewed their determination to further strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, including seeking to create synergies in the implementation of the strategies. In addition, they instructed to further deepen concrete consultations regarding Japan-U.S. cooperation on the

security front, taking into account the discussions at the Japan-U.S. “2+2.”

At the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting held in May, the two leaders reaffirmed the critical role that U.S. extended deterrence¹ plays in ensuring the security of Japan as well as the peace and stability of the region, coupled with Japan’s enhanced defense capabilities. President Biden reiterated the U.S. commitment to the defense of Japan under the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, backed by the full range of capabilities, including nuclear, and, in this context, the two leaders reaffirmed their intent to ensure full bilateral coordination throughout every phase of a developing situation. The two leaders then commended the robust and in-depth consultations on U.S. extended deterrence at the latest Japan-U.S. “2+2” and Extended Deterrence Dialogue (EDD) meetings, and reaffirmed the importance of further strengthening such consultations (See the Special Feature on page 197).

In 2023, Japan continued to engage in personnel exchanges with senior U.S. defense officials, including successive visits to Japan by Admiral James F. Caldwell Jr., Director of Naval Reactors in April; David H. Berger, Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps in May; Secretary of Defense Austin in June; Michael M. Gilday, Chief of Naval Operations in July; General Anthony J. Cotton, Commander of U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM), General Eric M. Smith, Assistant Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, and Admiral John C. Aquilino, Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command in September; General



Japan-U.S. “2+2” (January 11, Washington, D.C., U.S.)



¹ Providing deterrence that a country possesses to its allies and partners.

What is Extended Deterrence?

3

In the vicinity of Japan, military buildups, including of nuclear weapons and missiles, are rapidly advancing, coupled with mounting pressures by unilaterally changing the status quo by force. North Korea intends to bolster its nuclear capabilities both in quality and in quantity at the maximum speed, and is rapidly developing its missile-related technologies. Russia continues to repeat words and actions that could be interpreted as threats of use of nuclear weapons in the context of its aggression against Ukraine, and further, has suspended the implementation of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START Treaty) alongside other actions that go against arms control efforts to date. China has been extensively and rapidly enhancing its military power, including its nuclear and missile capabilities, without sufficient transparency. There are also movements toward cooperation between China and Russia, and between Russia and North Korea respectively. Amid this severe security environment, Japan is advocating a policy of further strengthening deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance including U.S. extended deterrence in its National Security Strategy (NSS) and other documents, in order to ensure the security of Japan.

“Deterrence” is comprehended as serving the function of discouraging aggression by making the other party clearly aware that it would suffer intolerable damage if it were to commit aggression, or recognize clearly that our side has the ability to physically deny attack by the aggressor. Accordingly, “extended deterrence” generally refers to extending the deterrence of a certain country to its allies and partners. In this regard, Japan is provided with extended deterrence by its ally, the U.S.

“Deterrence capabilities” constitute not only nuclear, but also include response capabilities based on conventional forces. Using only conventional forces, it is difficult to deter an actor that is threatening to use nuclear weapons; in such cases, it is necessary to deter that actor with nuclear capabilities. However, Japan is a State Party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), upholds the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, and will therefore not possess any nuclear weapons on its own. Under such a premise, and in the face of the reality of security threats to Japan, such as those of nuclear weapons, U.S. extended deterrence, including through nuclear weapons, is indispensable.

The U.S. has, on many occasions, affirmed its commitment to defend Japan under the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, and to extend deterrence to Japan through a full range of capabilities, including nuclear.

Japan and the U.S. have also engaged in the close exchange of wide-ranging views on a regular basis on various matters related to the deterrence policies of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. In particular, in the working-level Japan-U.S. Extended Deterrence Dialogue that has been held on a regular basis since 2010, Japan and the U.S. hold in-depth discussions on extended deterrence and consult on measures to further enhance relevant bilateral cooperation. In 2023, the two governments engaged in extensive discussions in the U.S. in June and in Japan in December, including through table-top exercises. On each occasion, the respective delegations had the opportunity to observe important troops and defense equipment for deterrence, such as B-2 strategic bombers in the U.S. and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force’s Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade in Sasebo, Japan.

Furthermore, in May 2022, Prime Minister Kishida and President Biden emphasized the further strengthening of U.S. extended deterrence, and concurred on communicating more closely between the two countries including at the ministerial level. In light of this, at the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (Japan-U.S. “2+2”) held in January 2023, Japan and the U.S. took time to have in-depth discussions on extended deterrence as one of the agenda items. In this way, the Japan-U.S. Alliance is steadily deepening in the aspect of extended deterrence as well. Going forward, Japan will continue to further strengthen bilateral dialogues at various levels, and to further enhance relevant concrete cooperation, with a view to maintaining and strengthening U.S. extended deterrence.



Tour of B-2 strategic bombers during the Japan-U.S. Extended Deterrence Dialogue (June, Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, U.S.; Photo: U.S. Department of Defense)



Discussions at the Japan-U.S. Extended Deterrence Dialogue (December, Japan)

Charles Q. Brown, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. in November; and General Charles A. Flynn, Commanding General, U.S. Army, Pacific and Jacqueline D. Van Ovost, Commander, U.S. Transportation Command in December. In August, there was also a visit to Japan by Representative Robert Wittman, U.S. Congressman, and his delegation.

In accordance with the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting held in May, discussions within the EDD on extended deterrence were further intensified. The EDD was established in 2010, and as a part of Japan-U.S. security and defense cooperation, it provides an opportunity for the two governments to discuss regional security, Alliance defense posture, nuclear and missile defense policy, and arms control issues, to engage in an in-depth exchange of views on means to sustain and strengthen extended deterrence, which is at the core of the Japan-U.S. Alliance and to deepen mutual understanding on alliance deterrence. At the EDD meeting held at Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri in June, the U.S. side reiterated its commitment to increase the visibility of U.S. strategic assets in the region. The two sides also concurred to continue to explore avenues to deepen Alliance cooperation through improved information sharing, training, and exercises, including the use of table-top exercises, to further prepare the Alliance to defend against potential attacks and deter nuclear employment. Both sides also pledged to improve coordination and strengthen the Alliance's capabilities and posture to adversary missile threats. As a part of the meeting, the delegations experienced a B-2 flight simulator, and toured a B-2 strategic bomber and decommissioned Minuteman II launch control center. At the EDD meeting hosted by Japan in December, the two sides shared assessments of the regional security environment, and reviewed Alliance conventional and U.S. nuclear capabilities contributing to regional deterrence and highlighted the importance of optimizing the Alliance's force posture and activities to bolster deterrence effectiveness. They also discussed strategic arms control and risk reduction approaches in response to nuclear risks that are becoming increasingly challenging and complex as diversification and expansion of regional actors' nuclear arsenals are advancing. In addition, the delegations visited the JGSDF's Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade in Camp Ainoura and Sakibe, which plays an important role in defense and deterrence

of the Southwestern Islands of Japan. In both the meetings held in June and December, agencies from both sides conducted table-top exercises, which have regularly been included in the EDD meeting agenda to discuss ways to coordinate Alliance deterrence efforts. Through such multilayered initiatives, Japan will continue to promote security and defense cooperation with the U.S., and to further strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the Alliance.

B Missile Defense

Japan has been making steady efforts to develop and engage in the production of the Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) system while continuing cooperation with the U.S., including on the steady implementation of joint development and joint production of the Standard Missile 3 (SM-3 Block IIA) since 2006, and Japan is fully prepared to protect the lives and property of its citizens from the threat of ballistic missiles to Japan under any circumstances. Japan is also advancing efforts to effectively address new aerial threats, including hypersonic weapons. At the Japan-U.S. "2+2" held in January, based on the progress of joint analysis on counter-hypersonic technology, the Ministers concurred to begin joint research on important elements including advanced materials and hypersonic testbeds, and also concurred to begin discussion on potential joint development of a future interceptor. Based on this, the two countries conducted a review and consequently announced during the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting in August that they have decided to initiate the joint development of Glide Phase Interceptors (GPI).

C Cyberspace

At the Japan-U.S. "2+2" meeting convened in January, Japan and the U.S. concurred to intensify collaboration to counter increasingly sophisticated and persistent cyber threats. In light of the outcomes of the Japan-U.S. "2+2" meeting and the necessity for cross-governmental efforts by both Japan and the U.S., the 8th Japan-U.S. Cyber Dialogue was convened in May, where participants held discussions on a wide range of issues regarding Japan-U.S. cooperation on cyber-related matters, including cyber policies in both countries, cooperation in international areas and bilateral cooperation. Stakeholders from

both sides engage in discussions, through frameworks such as the Japan-U.S. Cyber Dialogue, on bilateral cooperation across a wide range of areas. Furthermore, the two sides are continuing to cooperate on matters related to cyberspace, including promoting bilateral policy coordination, strengthening systems and capabilities, and exchanging incident information, while taking into consideration Japan's cyber security strategy and the cyber policies of the U.S.

D Space

At the Japan-U.S. “2+2” convened in January, Japan and the U.S. committed to deepening cooperation on space capabilities, and considered that attacks to, from, or within space, present a clear challenge to the security of the Alliance, and affirmed such attacks, in certain circumstances, could lead to the invocation of Article V of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. Japan and the U.S. are continuing to cooperate on space security, including through mutual exchanges of information in the field of Space Situational Awareness and others, as well as cooperation on hosted payloads (mission instruments loaded onto other entities' satellites).

E Information Security

Information security plays a crucial role in advancing cooperation within the context of the Alliance. Based on this perspective, both countries continue to hold discussions designed to enhance their cooperation regarding information security, the importance of which was affirmed at the Japan-U.S. “2+2” held in January.

(3) Realignment of U.S. Forces in Japan

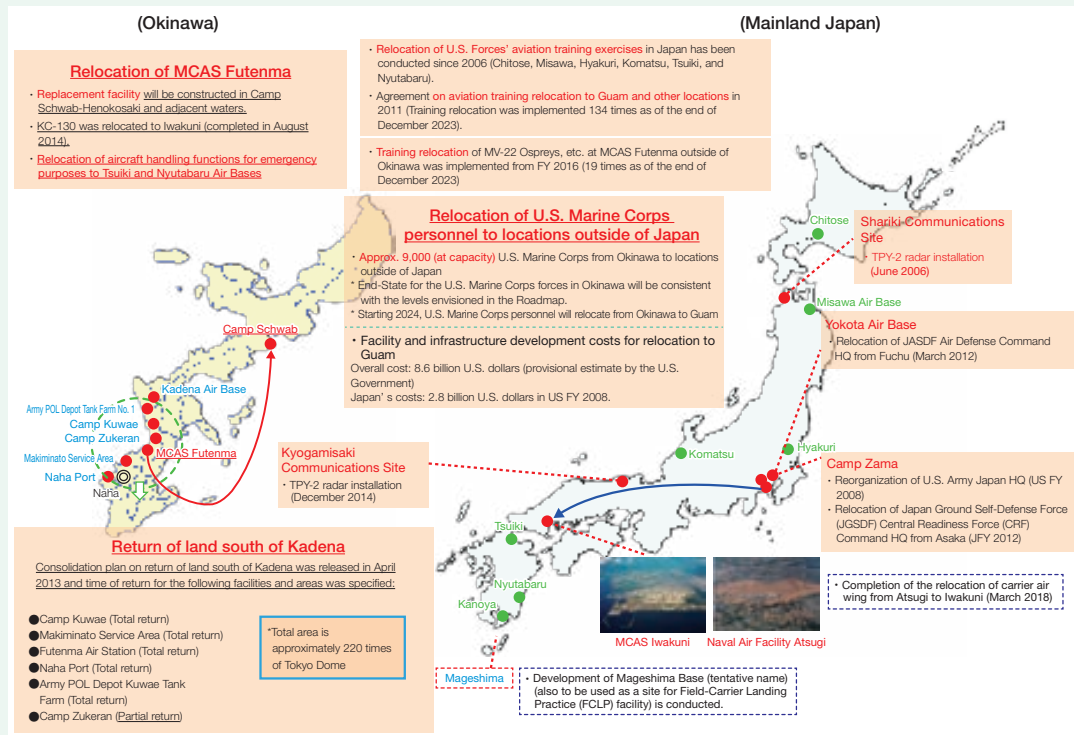
While advancing the efforts described above, the Government of Japan will continue to make every effort to mitigate the impact on local communities, including Okinawa, and to maintain the stable presence of U.S. Forces in Japan, by steadily implementing the realignment of U.S. Forces in Japan, including the relocation of MCAS Futenma to Henoko.

In the Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee (“2+2”) released in January, the two sides confirmed the importance of accelerating bilateral work on these force realignment efforts. In the Statement,

Japan and the U.S. affirmed the need to optimize the Alliance force posture based on the improved operational concepts and enhanced capabilities, including the defense of the Southwestern Islands of Japan. They also confirmed that the forward posture of U.S. Forces in Japan should be upgraded to strengthen Alliance deterrence and response capabilities by positioning more versatile, resilient, and mobile forces with increased intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, anti-ship, and transportation capabilities. In line with such policy, Japan and the U.S. affirmed that the Japan-U.S. Roadmap for Realignment Implementation, as adjusted at the Japan-U.S. “2+2” in April 2012, will be readjusted so that the 3rd Marine Division Headquarters and the 12th Marine Regiment will remain in Okinawa and the 12th Marine Regiment will be reorganized into the 12th Marine Littoral Regiment by 2025. This effort will be carried out while maintaining the basic tenets of the 2012 Realignment Plan, with utmost consideration to the impacts on local communities. Japan and the U.S. also confirmed the importance of accelerating bilateral work on U.S. Force realignment efforts, including construction of relocation facilities and land returns in Okinawa, and the relocation of Marine Corps personnel from Okinawa to Guam beginning in 2024.

In particular, the return of lands in Okinawa has been realized by completing various return projects based on the April 2013 “Consolidation Plan for Facilities and Areas in Okinawa,” even after the return of a major portion of the Northern Training Area (NTA, approximately 4,000 hectares) in December 2017. The return of all areas indicated as “Immediate Return” under the Consolidation Plan was achieved with the return of a portion of the Facilities and Engineering Compound in Camp Zukeran in March 2020. The land near Samashita Gate at Futenma Air Station was also returned in December 2020, followed by the return of the laundry factory area of Makiminato Service Area (land along National Route No. 58) in May 2021. In May 2022, which marked the 50th anniversary of the reversion of Okinawa to Japan, Japan and the U.S. concurred to enable the public use of the Lower Plaza Housing Area of Camp Zukeran as a greenspace, ahead of its return to Japan, and the start of general use commenced in March 2024.

Realignment of USFJ – An Overview



In the "2+2" joint statement released in April, 2012, Japan and the U.S. decided to delink both the relocation of U.S. Marine Corps personnel from Okinawa to Guam and land returns south of Kadena from progress on the relocations of MCAS Futenma

(4) Host Nation Support (HNS)

With a view to ensuring the effective operations of U.S. Forces in Japan amidst the growing severity of the security situation surrounding Japan, Japan bears a part of costs, such as the costs of Facility Improvement Programs (FIP), within the scope provided for under the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). In addition, Japan has also borne the labor costs for U.S. Forces working in Japan, utilities costs, and training relocation costs, by concluding the Special Measures Agreements (SMAs) which set out special measures relating to the SOFA. Under the New SMA signed on January 7, 2022, and entered into force on April 1, it was decided that Japan will also bear the expenditures related to the procurement of training equipment and materials which will contribute, not only to the readiness of U.S. Forces in Japan but also to the enhancement of the interoperability between the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) and the U.S. Forces. Based on the SOFA and the New SMA, the Government of Japan will bear the HNS costs from FY2022 to FY2026. In consultations

on the New SMAs, as both parties concurred that the costs borne by Japan should be used to build a foundation upon which the Japan-U.S. Alliance will be further strengthened, the Japanese side decided to refer to this budget by a Japanese phrase that points to its goal of enhancing Alliance readiness and resiliency. During the effective period of the new SMAs (April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2027), the annual average budget for HNS is approximately 211 billion Japanese yen.

(5) Various Issues Related to the Presence of the U.S. Forces in Japan

To ensure the smooth and effective operation of the Japan-U.S. security arrangements and the stable stationing of U.S. Forces in Japan as the linchpin of these arrangements, it is important to mitigate the impact of U.S. Forces' activities on residents living in the vicinity and to gain their understanding and support regarding the stationing of U.S. Forces. The Government of Japan, in light of the requests from local communities, has

been making utmost efforts in areas such as the steadily implementation of the Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Stewardship of 2015 and the Agreement on Cooperation with regard to Implementation Practices relating to the Civilian Component of the United States Armed Forces in Japan of 2017, preventing and responding to incidents and accidents involving U.S. Forces, abating the noise by U.S. Forces' aircraft, and dealing with environmental issues at U.S. Forces' facilities and areas. At the Japan-U.S. "2+2" convened in January 2023, Foreign Minister Hayashi requested the U.S. side to strengthen cooperation in matters related to the environment, including per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). As a result, in the Joint Statement of the Japan-U.S. "2+2", the two sides affirmed that they would enhance environmental cooperation.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is implementing various initiatives, including exchanges between U.S. Forces personnel and residents living near U.S. Forces' facilities and areas in Japan.

Since FY2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) have been implementing Student Educational Exchange and Dialogue (SEED) projects at the U.S.

Forces' facilities and areas in Japan. These projects provide an opportunity for Japanese and American junior high school and high school students to engage in cultural and educational exchanges at schools located within the U.S. Forces' facilities and areas, and have been implemented continuously in various parts of Japan with the cooperation of local governments and U.S. Forces in Japan (See the column on this page).

Particularly in Okinawa, where there is a concentration of U.S. Forces' facilities and areas, the "TOFU: Think of Okinawa's Future in the U.S." program is implemented to provide an opportunity for high school and university students from Okinawa to witness what Japan's alliance partner, the U.S., is truly like, and the role that Japan plays in the international community, as well as to promote mutual understanding between the two countries. Visits to the U.S. have not been implemented since FY2019 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but resumed in FY2022 with 40 participants, twice that of the usual number. The program served as an opportunity for participants to cultivate an international perspective, including visits to Washington, D.C. and New York, exchanges of opinions with key government officials in Tokyo and the respective cities in the U.S., and tours of government facilities.

COLUMN

Student Educational Exchange and Dialogue (SEED) Project

Since 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), has conducted exchange programs (Student Educational Exchange and Dialogue (SEED) project) for the children of U.S. Forces personnel and local junior and high school students in communities that host U.S. Forces in Japan. By sowing the "SEED" for further cultural and educational exchanges, this program aims to nurture human resources who will take an active role in international society as well as to enhance mutual understanding between Japanese and American junior and senior high school students.

In 2023, the program was held at Yokota Air Base (Tokyo), Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni (Yamaguchi Prefecture), Kadena Air Base (Okinawa Prefecture), U.S. Fleet Activities Sasebo (Nagasaki



Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs HOSAKA Yasushi interacting with the participating students (October 22, Sasebo City, Nagasaki Prefecture)



Presentation of completion certificates by Ambassador in charge of Okinawan Affairs, MIYAGAWA Manabu, and DoDEA Pacific South District Superintendent, Dr. Melissa Hayes (October 15, Kadena City, Okinawa Prefecture)

Prefecture), U.S. Fleet Activities Yokosuka (Kanagawa Prefecture), Camp Zama (Kanagawa Prefecture), and Misawa Air Base (Aomori Prefecture). This column introduces the voices of both Japanese and U.S. students who participated in the program.

● **Luke A. Danjanic, EJ King Middle High School**

The SEED event provided a fantastic opportunity to interact with my Japanese peers. Unlike formal settings such as school tours or games with strict rules during field trips, this event allowed for a more casual and open exchange. The activities fostered healthy discourse among peers and proved to be an effective bonding technique, though they might have been challenging for some students. The character design activity was my favorite, with each group presenting a unique character symbolizing the friendship between Japan and the U.S. It was fascinating to witness the diverse creations from an eleven-word prompt. Another enjoyable activity involved creating skits based on cultural differences between the U.S. and Japan. One group highlighted the contrasting approaches to ordering at a restaurant. In Japan, you shout out to call the waiter without consequence, while in the U.S., such an act might receive a disapproving look or worse. A highlight of the event was the opportunity to meet the mayor and the head of the Sasebo Board of Education. This encounter further solidified the bond between our two countries. It showcased that youth from both nations are willing to seek common ground to better our future.

● **EIYAMA Kanade, Ginowan Municipal Kakazu Junior High School**

I participated in the exchange program held at Kadena Air Base in October, with my brother who is one year older. Although I had previously visited the air base with my parents for the annual festival and other events, I had never entered the living areas before, so I was looking forward to it while feeling a little anxious at the same time. I was a little nervous when our yellow school bus went through the air base's security, but there was such a wide range of events taking place that my anxiety quickly dissipated. My Halloween face paint did not come off at all, and faint traces of it remained on my face the next day. The food portions were huge, and the juice tasted like nothing I had ever tried before. Although there were many differences, such as the things that we find funny and the ways in which we write the alphabet (the letters "P" and "A"), I talked a lot with everyone. They talked to me in Japanese as I could not speak any English, and we drew funny pictures and laughed about them as well as talked about the anime that we like. We were similar yet different, and it felt strange yet fun. I think that there is much more we can learn and understand about different cultures through small things like these. Through my participation in this event, I think this was the first time I became aware of the existence of various countries. When it comes to intercultural understanding, I hope to broaden the horizons of my world further in the future without being bound by conventions.

(6) The United Nations Forces and U.S. Forces in Japan

Coincident with the start of the Korean War in June 1950, the UN forces were established in July of the same year based on the recommendation of UN Security Council resolution 83 in June. Following the cease-fire agreement concluded in July 1953, the United Nations Command (UNC) Headquarters was relocated to Seoul (South Korea) in July 1957, and UNC-Rear (UNC-R) was established in Japan. Established at Yokota Air Base, UNC-R currently has four military staff members including a stationed commander, as well as military attachés from nine countries who are stationed at embassies in Tokyo as liaison officers for the UN forces. Based on Article 5 of the Agreement Regarding the Status of the United Nations Forces in Japan, the UN forces in Japan may use the

U.S. Forces' facilities and areas in Japan to the minimum extent required to provide support for military logistics for the UN forces. At present, the UN forces in Japan are authorized to use the following seven facilities: Camp Zama, U.S. Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, U.S. Fleet Activities, Sasebo, Yokota Air Base, Kadena Air Base, MCAS Futenma and White Beach Area.

In July 2019, a joint board was held between the Government of Japan and UNC. The meetings saw discussions held over the situation on the Korean Peninsula, with the two sides reaching an agreement on notification procedures in case of unusual occurrences related to the UN forces in Japan. In October 2023, General Paul J. LaCamera (Commander, UNC/Combined Forces Command/United States Forces Korea) paid a courtesy call to Foreign Minister Kamikawa. Foreign Minister Kamikawa expressed her

high appreciation for the surveillance activities against illegal ship-to-ship transfers by the UNC Sending States as well as the role played by Japan-U.S. Alliance and the trilateral coordination among Japan, the U.S. and the ROK for peace and stability in the region. She also stated that Japan looks forward to continuing the enhancement of the relationship with the UNC.

3 Global Security

(1) Regional Security

In the international community, a historical shift in the power balance, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, is occurring. In light of the numerous security challenges confronting this region, there is a need for Japan to cooperate with its allies and like-minded countries and others. In particular, it is more important than ever to further strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. There is also a need for Japan to fundamentally reinforce its own defense capabilities. At the same time, by actively strengthening bilateral and multilateral security cooperation with each country, Japan has been making efforts to realize a desirable regional security environment for Japan.

Japan and Australia concurred, at the leaders' and foreign ministerial levels, to continue strengthening cooperation in partnership with like-minded countries, with a view to further deepening the "Special Strategic Partnership" between the two countries and realizing a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)." In August, the Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), aimed at facilitating cooperative activities such as joint exercises, disaster relief, and other forms of cooperative activities between the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) and Australian Defence Force, entered into force. Immediately after that, Japan and Australia conducted joint exercises under the RAA with reciprocal deployments of F-35 fighter jets between the two countries. At the Japan-Australia Leaders' Meeting and Japan-Australia Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in September, the two sides welcomed

the implementation of joint exercises under the RAA and concurred on strengthening security cooperation, guided by the new Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation.² With regard to illicit maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers³, the Australian Defence Force conducted monitoring and surveillance activities in the waters around Japan by their naval vessels in late May and from late October to mid-November, and by their aircraft from early February to early March as well as from late August to mid-September. The 5th Japan-Australia Cyber Policy Dialogue was held in December, during which the two sides exchanged views on broad topics, such as each country's cybersecurity strategy and policy, bilateral and multilateral cooperation including the UN, and capacity building support.

Japan and India held three summit meetings: during Prime Minister Kishida's visit to India in March, at the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, and at the G20 New Delhi Summit in September. At these talks, Japan and India affirmed that they would work to further develop the "Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership." At the working level, the Fifth Japan-India Cyber Dialogue was held in September to exchange views on national cyber policies and cybersecurity strategies, current cyber threat landscape, 5G and Open RAN technology developments of 5G and Open RAN technology. Both sides also discussed bilateral cooperation in the field of capacity building support, as well as cooperation at the UN and among Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad). In September, the first-ever Joint Service Staff Talks between Japan and India were held, and both sides concurred on further advancing defense cooperation, which has until now focused on service-to-service cooperation, to a joint services level.

In relation to the Republic of Korea (ROK), after concurring on activating communication between their governments in a wide range of fields at the Japan-ROK Summit Meeting held in March, active dialogues were also held in the field of security, including the resumption of the Japan-ROK Security Dialogue in April after

² A document that sets out the direction for security and defense cooperation between Japan and Australia over the next 10 years, signed at the Japan-Australia Leaders' Meeting in October 2022.

³ In this context, "ship-to-ship transfers" refers to the transfers to or from North Korea-flagged vessels of any goods or items at sea, which UN Security Council resolution 2375 (adopted in September 2017) prohibits UN member states from facilitating or engaging in.

a five-year absence. Taking the opportunity of various occasions such as international conferences, talks were held between the leaders, foreign ministers, defense ministers, and heads of the national security agencies of Japan and the ROK, as well as Japan, the ROK, and the U.S., during which the countries affirmed their response to North Korea and close cooperation toward the realization of FOIP. Furthermore, in light of the Japan-U.S.-ROK Trilateral Defense Ministerial Meeting held in June, the Japan-U.S.-ROK Trilateral Defense Ministers' telephone call in September, and the Japan-U.S.-ROK Trilateral Defense Ministerial Teleconference Meeting in November, the three countries conducted joint exercises (February, April, July, August, September, October, November) among other forms of cooperation, and are promoting further trilateral cooperation to address regional security issues. Based on the Joint Leaders' Statement issued by Japan, the U.S., and the ROK in December, the three countries commenced the full activation of a real-time DPRK missile warning data sharing mechanism and jointly established a multi-year trilateral exercise plan in December.

In relation to the UK, which is Japan's "global strategic partner," at the Japan-UK Summit Meeting held in May 2022, the two countries affirmed their agreement in principle to the Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), aimed at facilitating cooperative activities such as joint exercises, disaster relief activities, and other activities between the JSDF and the UK Armed Forces. In January 2023, Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Sunak signed the RAA at the Japan-UK Summit Meeting and concurred on further deepening security and defense cooperation. The Japan-UK RAA entered into force in October, and was applied for the first time to the field training exercise, Vigilant Isles 23, between the Japan Ground Self Defense Force (JGSDF) and the British Army, conducted in November in Japan. In December 2022, Japan, the UK, and Italy decided on and announced the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP), a joint development program for next-generation fighter aircraft. The three countries concurred on the recognition that this cooperative program is expected to build a foundation for global safety, stability, and prosperity over the next several decades. Furthermore, in December,



Signing of Japan-UK RAA (January 11, London, UK; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

Japan, the UK, and Italy signed the Convention on the Establishment of the "Global Combat Air Programme – GCAP International Government Organisation (GIGO)", and affirmed their firm resolve to continue working together to overcome various issues, with a view to completing development by 2035. With regard to illicit maritime activities including ship-to-ship transfers, the Royal Navy vessel engaged in monitoring and surveillance operations in the waters surrounding Japan in early January. The 7th Japan-UK Bilateral Consultations on Cyber Issues were held in February. In addition to exchanging views on broad topics, such as on each country's cybersecurity strategy and policy, cooperation in international fora including the UN, and capacity building for cybersecurity, both sides also discussed about related policies including on 5G and Open RAN technologies. The Fifth Japan-UK Foreign and Defence Ministers' Meeting ("2+2") was convened in November. At the meeting, the four ministers concurred to further strengthen the relationship between Japan and the UK to maintain and strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law, and issued a Joint Statement.

With France, which Japan shares an "Exceptional Partnership" with, the Sixth Japan-France Foreign and Defence Ministers' Meeting ("2+2") took place in January 2022. The Ministers shared the view of raising cooperation in the Indo-Pacific to a higher level and further promoting cooperation to address regional situations and challenges facing the international community. France has dispatched its Navy frigate since early April and Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) from early to late October to the waters surrounding Japan, to conduct surveillance operations against illicit

maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers. At the Japan-France Summit Meeting held in January, the two leaders welcomed the progress in substantive cooperation, including reciprocal visits of assets and joint exercises between Japan and France, and concurred in deepening cooperation between the two countries. At the Seventh Japan-France Foreign and Defense Ministers' Meeting ("2+2") held in May, the French side reiterated France's strong commitment to the Indo-Pacific region, and the four ministers exchanged views on Japanese-French cooperation in areas such as cyber, space, and economic security. They highly appreciated the defense cooperation and exchanges between Japan and France, and shared the view to deepen such cooperation and exchanges as well as defense equipment and technology cooperation. The 7th Japan-France Bilateral Consultations on Cybersecurity were held in November, during which the two sides exchanged views broadly on cybersecurity strategy and policy, bilateral and multilateral cooperation, 5G technology and capacity building including human resource development in cybersecurity. During the Japan-France Telephone Summit Meeting held in December, the Roadmap that will guide the Japan-France cooperation was announced, and the two leaders concurred on making a further leap on their "exceptional partnership."

In relation to Germany, negotiations commenced in September on the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany Concerning Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services between the Self-Defense Forces of Japan and the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Germany ("Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement," or ACSA), which facilitates the smooth and prompt provision of supplies and services between the JSDF and the Armed Forces of Germany, in order to promote joint activities between the two forces. An agreement in principle was reached in November.

At the Japan-Italy Summit Meeting held in May 2022, Japan welcomed the progress in Japan-Italy security cooperation, including joint exercises in the Gulf of Aden by the Japan Maritime SDF and the Italian Navy, and the training of Japan Air SDF pilots by the Italian Air Force, and valued the formulation of the documents on the Indo-Pacific published by Italy, based on the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the

Indo-Pacific. At the Japan-Italy Summit Meeting held in January 2023, the two leaders welcomed the GCAP announced at the end of 2022, and concurred on upgrading the relationship between the two countries to that of "strategic partners," and shared the view to establish consultations between the respective foreign and defense authorities as well as to further promote cooperation in the field of security. Italy dispatched the Italian Navy's naval frigate *Francesco Morosini* to Yokosuka in June 2023, and the Italian Air Force's F-35A and other aircraft to JASDF Komatsu Air Base in August the same year to participate in the respective joint exercises. In December, Japan, the UK, and Italy signed the Convention on the Establishment of the GIGO.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is located in a geopolitically strategic position, and faces Japan's important sea lanes. A stable and prosperous ASEAN region is crucial to the stability and prosperity not only of the East Asia region but also of the international community. On June 3, Japan signed the Agreement concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology with Singapore, which entered into force on the same day. In October, Japan delivered an air surveillance radar system to the Philippines as the first transfer case of finished equipment, and in November, Japan and the Philippines concurred to commence negotiations on the Japan-Philippines Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA). To ensure the rule of law in the seas, Japan also provides continuous support to the Philippines, Malaysia, Viet Nam, Indonesia, and other countries to improve the law enforcement capabilities of their coast guard authorities. The first joint exercise among the coast guard agencies of Japan, the U.S., and the Philippines was held in June.

As for Canada, at the summit meeting held during the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May 2023 and on other occasions, Japan and Canada welcomed the steady progress of cooperation between the two countries, including holding the negotiation on the General Security of Information Agreement in relation to the "Japan-Canada Action Plan for contributing to a free and open Indo-Pacific region," announced at the Japan-Canada Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in October 2022. In 2023, Canada deepened its engagement in

the region, including dispatching three naval vessels to the Indo-Pacific to conduct activities. At the summit meeting held on the occasion of Prime Minister Kishida's visit to Canada in January, Prime Minister Kishida explained that Japan had decided to fundamentally reinforce its defense capabilities including the possession of counterstrike capabilities, and to increase its defense budget based on the new "National Security Strategy" (NSS) and other documents, to which Prime Minister Justin Trudeau gave his full support. The two leaders also concurred to collaborate closely for the peace and stability of the region. With regard to joint exercises with the Canadian Armed Forces, the Japan-Canada joint exercise "KAEDEx," which has been conducted every year since 2017, was held in June. A number of multilateral joint exercises were also conducted, including "EXERCISE SAMASAMA," a joint exercise conducted in October among Japan, the U.S., the Philippines, Canada, and the UK. As for responding to illicit maritime activities including ship-to-ship transfers, a Royal Canadian Navy vessel conducted monitoring and surveillance operations in early June and from early September to early November, while monitoring and surveillance activities by aircraft were carried out between early April and mid-May, and between early October and early November, in the waters surrounding Japan.

In relation to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), at the NATO Summit held in July, which Prime Minister Kishida attended, the leaders concurred to further enhance cooperation toward maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law, under the recognition that the security of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable. On this occasion, the Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP) was formulated as a new cooperation document to bring the Japan-NATO cooperation to new heights. In addition to traditional areas, both sides concurred on promoting cooperation in new areas such as cyber, emerging and disruptive technologies, space, and strategic communications. The first Japan-NATO Cyber Dialogue was held in November, during which the two sides exchanged views on broad topics ranging from each side's cyber policy to the Japan-NATO cooperation in the field of cyber.

At the Japan-EU Summit Meeting convened in July, Japan welcomed the EU's strengthened involvement in the Indo-Pacific amid the current severe security environment, and they concurred on establishing a strategic dialogue at the foreign ministerial level, as well as developing a security partnership in areas such as maritime security, cybersecurity, hybrid threats, and disarmament and non-proliferation. In addition, the 5th Japan-EU Cyber Dialogue was held in November. In this dialogue, the two sides exchanged views on various topics, such as cybersecurity strategy and policy, bilateral cooperation, and multilateral cooperation including through the UN, and capacity building support.

There are various issues of concern in relation to China, such as its intrusion into Japan's territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands, an inherent territory of Japan, the extensive and rapid enhancement of its military power without sufficient transparency, and increasing activities by its military in the waters and air spaces surrounding Japan. Japan will continue to make use of opportunities at high-level dialogues, including summit meetings and foreign ministers' meetings, to firmly maintain and assert its position and strongly call for responsible actions by China. As China's military trends are a matter of serious concern for Japan, Japan is working on communicating its policies through security dialogues such as the Japan-China Security Dialogue, as well as efforts to build multilayered channels for exchanges. At the same time, Japan is communicating its concerns and urging China to improve transparency in relation to its defense policies and military power, as well as to take more concrete actions to contribute to the security environment and to the region, including Japan. The Maritime and Aerial Communication Mechanism between the defense authorities of Japan and China that commenced operation in 2018 is aimed at promoting mutual understanding and mutual trust, and at avoiding unexpected collisions, and a hotline under this Mechanism commenced operation in May 2023.

Peace and stability in the Middle East region is vital to the peace and prosperity of the international community including Japan. The Middle East is one of the world's key energy suppliers, and approximately 90% of Japan's crude oil imports rely on the region. It is,

therefore, extremely important to ensure the safety of navigation of Japan-related vessels in this region. As Japan's own efforts toward ensuring peace and stability in the Middle East region and the safety of Japan-related vessels, the Government of Japan made a Cabinet decision in December 2019 on utilization of vessels and aircraft of the SDF (a) to make further diplomatic efforts toward easing tensions and stabilizing the situation in the Middle East, (b) to take thorough measures for ensuring safety of navigation including robust information sharing with relevant stakeholders, and (c) to strengthen its information gathering system. Japan has continued to conduct information gathering activities using SDF vessels and aircraft in the waters of the Middle East since January 2020. The 1st Cyber Security Consultation between Japan and Jordan was held in June, and the two sides shared their recent updates of cyber security policies and exchanged views on the current state of affairs in cyberspace. In May, Japan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the UAE concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, the first such agreement concluded between Japan and a country of the Middle East region. This Agreement entered into force in January 2024.

In addition, Japan has actively participated in and contributed to multilateral frameworks in the region, including the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus), in order to strengthen security cooperation in the region. The ARF is an important framework for dialogue on security in which various entities participate including North Korea and the EU, with the aims of improving the security environment of the Asia-Pacific region through dialogues and cooperation on political and security issues. It is also an important forum that focuses on confidence-building through various initiatives. In July, the 30th ARF Ministerial Meeting was held and the participants candidly exchanged views mainly on regional and international affairs, including issues concerning Ukraine, Taiwan, the East and South China Seas, North Korea, and Myanmar. Japan also actively contributes to the forum including through serving as a co-chair of all the Inter-Sessional Meetings

(ISM) on Maritime Security, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime, Disaster Relief, and ICTs Security.

Furthermore, in addition to government-to-government dialogues (track 1), Japan utilizes frameworks where participants from both public and private sectors exchange opinions and explain their security policies (track 1.5), as well as other means, as part of its efforts to promote other countries' understanding of Japan's security policies, and to facilitate cooperation and confidence-building in the region.

(2) Economic Security

A Trends Surrounding Economic Security

In recent years, various challenges have been surfacing in fields that cut across national security and the economy. The scope of the national security domain is expanding rapidly. Various risks are emerging, such as the risk of stolen or leaked advanced civilian technologies being converted to military use in other countries, the risk of suppliers influenced by foreign governments obstructing the stable operation of critical infrastructure such as those for telecommunications, the risk of disruptions to the supply of critical goods due to over-dependencies on other countries, and the risk of being targeted by economic coercion by some countries seeking to achieve political objectives by using their advantages in the supply chain or their purchasing power in the market as leverage.

In light of the emergence of various threats related to economic means, securing Japan's national interests such as peace, security, and economic prosperity by carrying out economic measures, in other words economic security, is becoming increasingly important. In view of this, Japan is accelerating efforts, such as the enactment of the Economic Security Promotion Act in May 2022, and its gradual execution. This Act is centered around four pillars: enhancing the resilience of supply chains, ensuring security and reliability of critical infrastructure, support for the development of advanced critical technologies, and non-disclosure of selected patent applications. In the face of various threats at hand through economic means, the National Security Strategy, established by the Government of Japan in December the same year, also lays out that Japan will coordinate ideas on

necessary economic measures and execute these measures comprehensively, effectively, and intensively to enhance Japan's self-reliance and to secure the advantage and indispensability concerning its technologies and others. Furthermore, to strengthen and promote economic security efforts, the Council for the Promotion of Economic Security, chaired by the Prime Minister and with the Foreign Minister as a member, has been convened since November 2021.

In light of the fact that it has become clear that supply chain vulnerabilities can have adverse impacts in diverse fields even from the perspective of development, the new Development Cooperation Charter approved by the Cabinet in June 2023, as one of the priority policies in Japan's development cooperation, advocates promoting cooperation to enhance resilience and diversification of supply chains as well as economic diversification, sustainable development of critical mineral resources, and stable supply and security of food, among other forms of cooperation, in order to strengthen the socioeconomic autonomy and resilience of developing countries. These efforts are important not only for the sustainable growth of developing countries, but also for Japan. To that end, Japan will actively work to support human resources development, legal system development, and relevant infrastructure development that contribute to addressing and resolving these issues.

B Recent Initiatives by Other Countries

Other countries have also been rapidly advancing initiatives to promote economic security in recent years.

The U.S. has taken the lead in adopting and implementing regulations and promotion measures from the perspectives of maintaining its technological advantage and addressing supply chain risks. In February, the Department of Justice and the Department of Commerce launched the Disruptive Technology Strike Force for the purpose of protecting its advanced technologies from illegal acquisition and use.

In August, President Biden issued an Executive Order (EO) to regulate outbound investment, and directed the Secretary of the Treasury to formulate new regulations.

In October, the Department of Commerce revised its semiconductor export control measures to

appropriately manage the export of semiconductors used in AI processing and supercomputers, as well as semiconductor manufacturing equipment used in high-end semiconductor production, due to concerns that sensitive technologies may be diverted to military applications.

The EU promotes strengthening resilience against the risk of supply disruptions to critical technologies and materials, under the concept of "strategic autonomy." The Foreign Subsidies Regulation (FSR) entered into force in January, enabling the European Commission to conduct investigations in the case of suspected market distortive effects caused by subsidies, in regard to activities conducted within EU markets by companies that have received subsidies from foreign governments outside of the region.

The European Commission published the European Economic Security Strategy in June. This strategy defines supply chain vulnerabilities, physical and cyber security risks to critical infrastructure, technology leakage, and the weaponization of trade policies or economic coercion, as risks to economic security, and sets out concrete measures to address such risks. In December 2021, the European Commission published its proposal for an Anti-Coercion Instrument (ACI), which provides procedures and standards for invoking countermeasures as a last resort when a third country refuses to stop its economic coercion on an EU Member State even with the implementation of dialogues and other deterrence measures. The proposal was adopted by the European Parliament and the European Council in October 2023, and entered into force in December the same year.

Australia has, thus far, positioned the securing of national resilience and the protection of assets and infrastructure as its national interests, and advanced concrete measures to that end. These include the formulation of the International Cyber and Critical Tech Engagement Strategy (April 2021), which sets out the policy for promoting the identification of technologies that should be protected, the tightening of investment screening systems for land and businesses related to sensitive national security (January 2021), and the establishment of the Next Generation Technologies Fund, which invests approximately 60 billion yen over 10 years from 2016 into game-changing technologies

on national security. In December 2021, the Security Legislation Amendment (Critical Infrastructure Protection) Act came into effect. This law is aimed at strengthening the resilience of critical infrastructure, and sets out the expansion of critical infrastructure departments and their responsibilities, as well as government support and intervention measures in the event of cyber security incidents.

Canada published its Critical Minerals Strategy in 2022 and strengthened its efforts ranging from critical mineral research and exploration to recycling. During the same year, Japan and Canada concurred on the “Japan-Canada Action Plan for contributing to a free and open Indo-Pacific region,” which includes cooperation in the field of energy security. Cooperation between the two countries in these fields has been further accelerated with the signing of two Memorandums of Cooperation concerning Battery Supply Chains and on Industrial Science and Technology in September 2023. Canada is also promoting economic security efforts in the Indo-Pacific region with other countries. In May 2023, the ROK and Canada signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Critical Mineral Supply Chains, and the Clean Energy Transition and Energy Security. In September, ASEAN and Canada concurred to establish the ASEAN-Canada Strategic Partnership and issued the ASEAN-Canada Joint Leaders’ Statement on Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition in Response to Crises. In January 2024, it announced new measures to protect Canadian research, which incorporates the publication of a list of named research organizations connected to military, national defense, or state security entities that may pose a risk to Canada’s national security, as well as a list of sensitive technology research areas. Under the new measures, grants and funding will not be provided to research in these areas if any of the researchers involved in activities supported by the grant are affiliated with, or in receipt of funding or in-kind support from, a university, research institute or laboratory connected to such entities.

C Diplomatic Efforts Toward the Promotion of Economic Security

Diplomacy plays a significant role in promoting economic security. Japan, in cooperation with the

international community, is engaged in active diplomacy in areas such as further strengthening cooperation with its ally and like-minded countries, responding to issues based on existing rules, and rule-making to address new challenges.

In relation to further strengthening cooperation with its ally and like-minded countries, Japan leverages cooperation under the Japan-U.S. Economic Policy Consultative Committee Meeting (the Economic “2+2”) and bilateral efforts with the UK and other partners, as well as cooperation under the G7, Japan-Australia-India-U.S., and Japan-U.S.-ROK, to expand and deepen cooperation with a view to developing common recognition and coordinating policies.

In responding to issues based on existing rules, Japan has worked on correcting unfair trade policies and practices of others in cooperation with like-minded countries from the perspective of consistency with existing rules, including World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements, Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), investment-related treaties. Furthermore, Japan gathers and analyzes information on economic security measures and trade rules, drawing on the efforts of like-minded countries, and works to ensure that Japan’s economic security policy needs are appropriately met.

With regard to rule-making to respond to new challenges, existing international agreements are not adequate for addressing areas such as critical and emerging technologies, including the fifth-generation mobile communications systems (5G), economic coercion, and others. In fields where there is a need to further develop international rules, Japan continues to play a leading role in international debates in cooperation with like-minded countries.

D Cooperation with its Ally and Like-minded Countries

Following on from last year, Japan continued to make particularly significant progress in cooperation with its ally and like-minded countries in 2023.

Under the G7 framework, economic resilience and economic security was established as an independent item for the first time in the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Communique, issued at the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in April. At the G7 Hiroshima Summit held

in May, a standalone session on economic resilience and economic security was convened for the first time in the history of the G7 Summit, and the G7 leaders affirmed that the G7 will be united in responding to issues such as 1) enhancing resilience of supply chains and critical infrastructure, 2) strengthening its response to non-market policies and practices and economic coercion, and 3) appropriately managing critical and emerging technologies. Based on this session, a comprehensive and concrete message on economic resilience and economic security was sent out in the form of the “G7 Leaders’ Statement on Economic Resilience and Economic Security.” Building on these outcomes, the G7 Trade Ministers’ Meeting in Osaka-Sakai held in October affirmed further progress in responding to economic coercion and strengthening the resilience of supply chains, while the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting held in November affirmed that efforts will be made to further develop international cooperation on economic resilience and economic security beyond the G7. At the G7 Leaders’ Video Conference held in December, Prime Minister Kishida noted that it is important to address issues, including non-market policies and practices and economic coercion, strengthening supply chains and key infrastructure, and managing sensitive technologies, in a comprehensive manner with close collaboration, and stated that the discussions in Hiroshima and the G7 Leaders’ Statement on Economic Resilience and Economic Security are the foundation for this. The leaders affirmed that they would continue strengthening cooperation among the G7.

In relation to the U.S., during the Economic “2+2” held in November, discussions were conducted on two topics: strengthening the rules-based economic order in the Indo-Pacific region, and strengthening economic resilience as well as promoting and protecting critical and emerging technologies. The two sides shared their plans to continue working to address non-market policies and practices and economic coercion in order to build a free and fair economic order in the Indo-Pacific region. They also confirmed their intention to accelerate cooperation, including on promoting and protecting

their technology in areas such as semiconductors, AI, quantum, clean energy, and 5G, and furthermore, confirmed that they will promote concrete collaboration in areas such as securing a stable supply of critical minerals and cooperation toward ensuring energy and food security.

At the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Leaders’ Meeting held in Hiroshima in May, the leaders affirmed, in the joint statement issued, that they will step up efforts to strengthen supply chain resilience and improve the region’s digital connectivity through access to critical and emerging technologies and advanced telecommunications technology, including 5G networks. In addition to announcing cooperation with Palau to establish a deployment of Open Radio Access Networks (Open RAN)⁴, the first in the Pacific, they also announced the release of the Open RAN Security Report, which analyzes the advantages, challenges, and possibility of overcoming challenges of Open RAN, and of the Quad Principles on Critical and Emerging Technology Standards.

At the Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit held in August, the leaders exchanged views on strengthening coordination on economic security. Furthermore, in the Japan-U.S.-ROK Joint Leaders’ Statement released after the Summit, the three countries concurred on working closely together to launch early warning system pilots for supply chain disruptions, and to enhance cooperation on technology protection measures.

With regard to Japan’s relations with the ROK, the leaders of the two countries concurred to launch a bilateral consultation on economic security during the Japan-ROK Summit Meeting held in March, and this consultation was conducted three times in 2023. In addition, the 15th Japan-ROK High-Level Economic Consultations were held in December, during which the ministers exchanged views on, among others, economic coercion, critical and emerging technologies, and supply chains, and concurred to continue working together.

In regard to relations with European countries, at the Japan-UK Summit Meeting held in May, the two leaders concurred on deepening cooperation on

⁴ Refers to radio access networks (RAN) that can be built in an open way by a combination of multiple vendors. It offers the advantage of contributing to the mitigation of supply chain risks.

economic security challenges, including economic coercion. The “Hiroshima Accord: An Enhanced Japan-UK Global Strategic Partnership” was issued on this occasion. In this document, the two sides agreed to work together on issues such as supply chain resilience, all forms of forced or coerced technology transfers and intellectual property theft, and export controls. They also noted shared concerns over, and strong opposition to, economic coercion and non-market policies and practices that distort the level playing field. In the Joint Leaders’ Statement on the Deepening of the Strategic Partnership between Japan and the Kingdom of Denmark, issued in October, the two leaders appreciated the G7 Leaders’ Statement on Economic Resilience and Economic Security, adopted at the G7 Hiroshima Summit, and concurred in enhancing cooperation on economic security, including in addressing non-market policies and practices, economic coercion and other harmful practices. This was reiterated in the Joint Statement on the Strategic Partnership between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway, issued in December.

With regard to Japan’s relations with Southeast Asian countries, the joint statement which was issued from the Japan-Philippines Summit Meeting held in February set out the decision to strengthen cooperation in the promotion of economic security, expressed concerns for and strong opposition to economic coercion, and stressed the importance of close coordination in addressing economic coercion. The Japan-Bangladesh Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership, released in April, also shared the recognition on the importance of economic security including strengthening resilience of supply chains, and the rules-based international economic order to counter challenges such as economic coercion. The Joint Statement on the Elevation of the Japan-Viet Nam Relations to the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity in Asia and the World, issued in November, affirmed the importance of cooperation to ensure economic security, recognized the importance of transparent, diverse, secure, sustainable, and reliable supply chains, and confirmed the enhancement of supply chain resilience to ensure stable production activities for the benefit of both sides. In addition, the Japan-Malaysia Joint Statement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership,

issued in December, expressed the shared intention to cooperate on economic security including strengthening supply chain resilience, and affirmed that the two sides will promote cooperation in areas including ICT.

E Response to Economic Coercion

Among the new issues described in “C” above, economic coercion that involves using economic ties with a specific country and taking measures or threatening to take measures in an abusive, arbitrary, or opaque manner, in order to achieve political objectives, is becoming a particularly serious problem against the backdrop of globalization and the growing economic interdependence between countries. Such economic coercion poses challenges to a free, open and rules-based international order (See the Special Feature on page 212).

The National Security Strategy published in December 2022 also sets out the policy for promoting effective efforts against economic coercion by foreign countries. To address economic coercion, which is an issue that cannot be adequately addressed by existing international agreements, it is important to foster a common understanding within the international community by working with its ally and like-minded countries and strategically raising international awareness. The G7 Leaders’ Statement on Economic Resilience and Economic Security, issued at the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May 2023, announced the launch of the Coordination Platform on Economic Coercion to increase collective assessment, preparedness, deterrence and response to economic coercion, and efforts are progressing under this platform.

F MOFA’s Role

Changes in the global security environment have increased a need to maintain and strengthen the rules-based international economic order, while also taking into account the perspective of security. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), as the ministry that is responsible for security policies, external economic relations and international law, will continue to lead diplomatic efforts related to economic security, as well as to work proactively to maintain and strengthen the international order.

**SPECIAL
FEATURE**

Response to Economic Coercion

Economic coercion that involves using economic ties with a specific country and taking measures or threatening to take measures in an abusive, arbitrary, or opaque manner, in order to achieve political objectives, is becoming a particularly serious problem against the backdrop of globalization and the growing economic interdependence between countries. Such economic coercion poses challenges to a free, open and rules-based international order, and it is unacceptable that the target country's autonomous policy decision-making or its sound economic development are inhibited by a specific country through economic coercion. The National Security Strategy published in December 2022 also sets out the policy for promoting effective efforts against economic coercion by foreign countries. Japan has also made use of various opportunities, including the G7 Hiroshima Summit held in May 2023, to clearly demonstrate its intention to counter economic coercion.

At the Hiroshima Summit, the launch of the Coordination Platform on Economic Coercion was announced through the issuance of the G7 Leaders' Statement on Economic Resilience and Economic Security. The Platform has already commenced its activities to seek early warning, rapid information sharing, collaborative situation assessment, and coordinated responses to economic coercion.

The G7 Trade Ministers' Meeting in Osaka-Sakai held in October also saw ministers engage in discussions on economic coercion and concur on working toward further progress as the G7.

Efforts in other fora than the G7 included, for instance, the issuance of the Joint Declaration Against Trade-Related Economic Coercion and Non-Market Policies and Practices in June by Japan, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the U.S. Building on the momentum from the G7, this Joint Declaration reiterates concerns about economic coercion and affirms that the respective countries will enhance international cooperation.

Japan is also deepening cooperation with countries in the Asia-Pacific region. For example, the Japan-Philippines Joint Statement issued in February and the Japan-Bangladesh Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership issued in April affirmed the importance of countering economic coercion. The same intention was also affirmed in joint statements with like-minded countries that do not belong to the G7, including the Joint Leaders' Statement on the Deepening of the Strategic Partnership between Japan and the Kingdom of Denmark issued in October, the Joint Statement on friendship and comprehensive partnership in the new era between Japan and the Kyrgyz Republic issued in November, and the Joint Statement on the Strategic Partnership between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway issued in December.

Japan will continue to make effective use of the frameworks of like-minded countries such as the G7, as well as bilateral measures, while actively promoting collaboration with an ally and like-minded countries and responses that are aligned with international rules.

(3) Cyber

Today, cross-border cyberspace has become an indispensable social infrastructure for conducting all activities in countries around the world, and its importance and public nature are growing due to its role as a public space that all citizens are engaged in. On the other hand, amid the growing competition among nations and other entities that reflects recent geopolitical tensions, cyberattacks have been used constantly to disable or destroy critical infrastructures, interfere in foreign elections, demand ransoms, and steal sensitive information, even in the form of state-sponsored cyberattacks.

Based on this recognition, MOFA is engaged in various diplomatic efforts to realize a free, fair, and secure cyberspace: promoting the development and deepening of rules and norms, working to deter cyberattacks, supporting capacity building, and engaging in international cooperation to effectively advance these efforts.

To promote the development and deepening of rules and norms, through discussions within the UN that have spanned about a quarter of a century, all UN Member States have confirmed the application of existing international law to cyberspace and concurred on the UN norms of responsible state behavior

in cyberspace⁵, which sets out 11 items. While these norms are not legally binding under international law, they provide the basis for the development of rules in cyberspace. Therefore, it is important for each country to specifically implement these norms, and to build up national practices. Based on this perspective, Japan participates actively in the relevant discussions in the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG), in which all UN Member States participate, for the term from 2021 to 2025. It is important for every country to clarify their basic positions on how existing international law applies to cyberspace, and Japan made its position public in 2021.⁶

As an initiative to deter cyberattacks, Japan has carried out “public attribution,” which is for each country to publicly condemn or express concerns about groups conducting cyberattacks. Japan has publicly condemned North Korea’s involvement behind the scenes on the WannaCry incident in 2017⁷ as well as the long-running cyberattacks perpetrated by the China-based group APT10 in 2018. Furthermore, in July 2021, the Press Secretary of MOFA issued a statement on cyberattacks, assessing that a group known as APT40, which the Chinese government is behind, as well as a group known as Tick, which Unit 61419 of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army is behind, were highly likely to have been involved in these cyberattacks, and firmly condemned these activities in coordination with Japan’s ally and like-minded countries. In 2023, Japan, together with the U.S., released a joint cybersecurity advisory about cyberattacks by the cyberattack group known as BlackTech, which the Chinese government is behind. While it may be difficult to identify cyberattacks, analyzing attacks, ascertaining the entities behind the attacks, and making the information public can raise awareness of the threat, send out the message that activities by the states or criminal organizations behind the attacks have been acknowledged and will not be tolerated, and help to shape international standards. This is expected to be effective in raising the costs of future activities for cyberattackers.

With regard to capacity building support, in view of the borderless nature of cyberspace, enhancing the capacity of other countries and regions contributes to the security environment for the world as a whole, including Japan. From this perspective, relevant ministries and agencies, including MOFA, continue to provide support for capacity building and promote initiatives through international organizations, with a focus on ASEAN, which is positioned as a cornerstone for realizing a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” based on the rule of law. Specifically, Japan conducts training, provides equipment at the ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Capacity Building Centre (AJCCBC), implements the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Country/Knowledge Co-Creation Program (KCCP), and contributes to the Cybersecurity Multi-Donor Trust Fund through the World Bank, among other initiatives.

International cooperation is of utmost importance in advancing these initiatives in cyberspace. To that end, Japan engages in cyber dialogues with many countries and regions, including consultations with the UK, the U.S., Jordan, India, France, NATO, EU, Australia, and among Japan-U.S.-ROK in 2023. Under the Quad Cybersecurity Partnership announced in May 2022 at the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Leaders’ Meeting, the four countries are cooperating on cybersecurity for critical infrastructure and capacity building support in the Indo-Pacific region, among other efforts. Japan also participates actively in discussions for the International Counter Ransomware Initiative, a multilateral framework hosted by the U.S. with the aim of addressing the rapidly growing threat of ransomware.⁸

Through these diplomatic efforts, Japan will continue to contribute to the realization of a free, fair and secure cyberspace.

(4) Maintaining and Developing the International Maritime Order

Japan is a country surrounded by the sea on all sides, and it is blessed with a vast exclusive economic zone

⁵ At the UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) in 2015, a report setting out 11 items on non-binding, voluntary norms for responsible state behavior was adopted.

⁶ See MOFA’s website for Japan’s position:
https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/page3e_001114.html

⁷ A malicious program that North Korea is believed to have been involved in. In May 2017, more than 300,000 computers in more than 150 countries were infected and ransom was demanded.

⁸ Cyberattacks carried out for ransom purposes.



(EEZ) and long coastlines. It is a maritime nation that has achieved economic growth through maritime trade and development of marine resources. “Free and Open Seas,” which are upheld by maritime order based on the rule of law including freedom of navigation and overflight, rather than force, are essential for the peace and prosperity not only of Japan but also of the international community as a whole. Based on this stance, the Government of Japan has stood united in promoting efforts to maintain and develop the international maritime order, in addition to securing Japan’s national interests in its territorial waters, in accordance with the Fourth Basic Plan on Ocean Policy adopted in April. In cooperation with its ally and like-minded countries, Japan is advancing efforts to realize a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP),” and in particular, working to strengthen maritime order in the Indo-Pacific region where important sea lanes are located.

A Basic Stance

There is an increasing number of cases, particularly in Asia, of tension arising from friction between countries over issues surrounding the seas. In light of this, in 2014, Prime Minister Abe shared the view that it was necessary to fully uphold the “Three Principles of the Rule of Law at Sea” (See 6(2) on page 257). At the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) convened in March 2023, Prime Minister Kishida reaffirmed the importance of the “Three Principles of the Rule of Law at Sea” in his introduction to the new plan for FOIP. Based on these principles, Japan has been cooperating with other countries to work toward maintaining and developing the international maritime order (See Chapter 2, Section 1).

B United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

Also known as the “Constitution for the Oceans,” UNCLOS is the very basis of maritime order governed by the rule of law. Japan regards maritime order with the Convention at the core as the cornerstone that safeguards Japan’s maritime rights and interests while facilitating its maritime activities across the international community. As such, Japan actively contributes to discussions among concerned international organizations at conferences that include the Meetings

of States Parties to the Convention, as well as to the sharing of ideas for achieving stability in the maritime legal order, in order to ensure that the convention will be even more widely applied and implemented appropriately (See 6(2) on page 257). At the G7 Hiroshima Summit held in May, G7 leaders emphasized the universal and unified character of the UNCLOS.

C Response to Challenges to Japan’s Sovereignty and Maritime Rights and Interests (Situation Surrounding the East China Sea) (See Chapter 2, Section 2, 2(1) B(D))

In the East China Sea, China Coast Guard vessels intruded into Japan’s territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands in rapid succession in 2023, and the number of days China Coast Guard vessels navigated in the contiguous zone around the Senkaku Islands reached a record high of 352 days in the year. Furthermore, there were repeated occurrences of China Coast Guard vessels intruding into the territorial sea and approaching Japanese fishing vessels, and the situation remains severe, with the number of hours of intrusion into the territorial sea hitting a record high of 80 hours and 36 minutes in April. Chinese military vessels and aircraft are also becoming increasingly active and expanding their operations, and China has been continuing with unilateral resource development in areas where the EEZ and the continental shelf are pending delimitation. Additionally, in recent years, Japan has found numerous research projects being conducted by China in the waters surrounding Japan, such as the East China Sea, without Japan’s consent. In July 2023, Japan confirmed the presence of a buoy believed to have been installed by China in Japan’s EEZ, on the Japan side of the geographical equidistance line between Japan and China in the East China Sea, and has been repeatedly calling on China since then to remove it immediately.

Given China’s continued unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East China Sea, Japan will carefully monitor the trends and movements around its air and sea spaces, and continue to respond in a firm but calm manner while making claims that should be made. At the same time, it will promote cooperation with the relevant countries including the U.S. in order to achieve peace and stability in the East China Sea.

Uotsuri Island (Ishigaki City, Okinawa Prefecture)



Photo: Office of Policy Planning and Coordination on Territory and Sovereignty, Cabinet Secretariat

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit convened in May, G7 leaders stated that they remain seriously concerned about the situation in the East and South China Seas, and strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion. Furthermore, at the ASEAN Japan Summit and East Asia Summit (EAS) held in September, Prime Minister Kishida expressed strong opposition to the continuing and intensifying activities in the East China Sea that infringe upon Japan's sovereignty. At the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation held in December, he reiterated serious concern over the continuing and intensifying activities in the East China Sea that infringe upon Japan's sovereignty, and stated that Japan will continue to cooperate with ASEAN to address the regional and international situation.

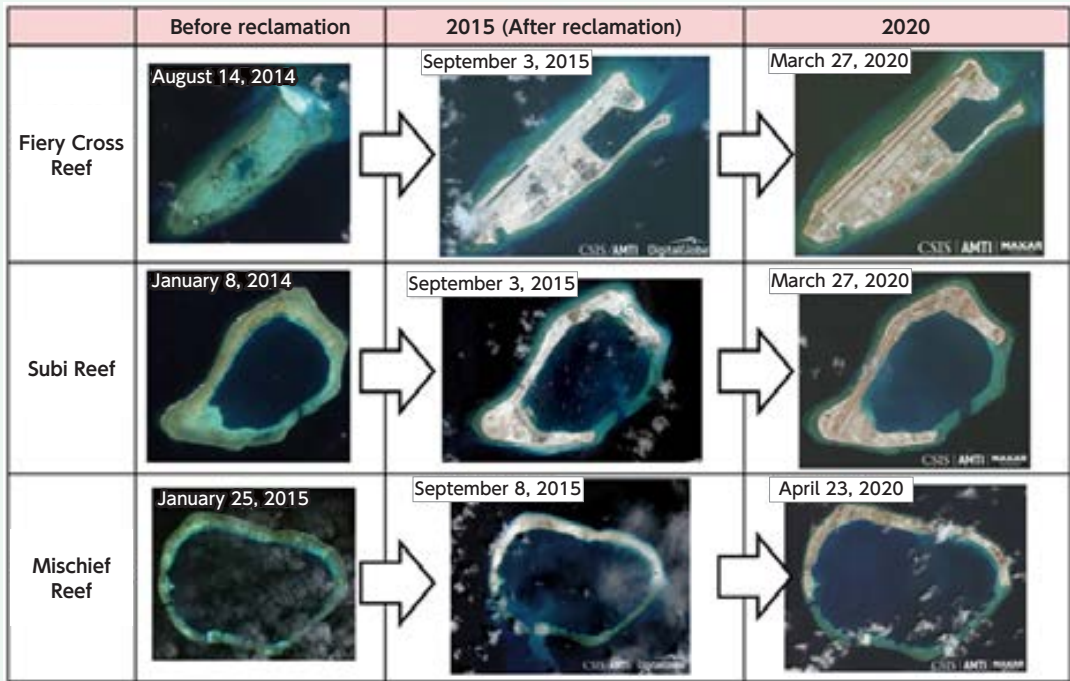
D Response to Challenges to the Maritime Order in the South China Sea (See Chapter 2, Section 2, 7(2))

In the South China Sea, China has been continuing and intensifying unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, which is against the rule of law and openness, attempts to make it fait accompli, as well as actions that increase tensions in the region. These

include further militarization of disputed features and coercive actions toward coastal states and others. The international community, including Japan, has expressed serious concerns over these actions. Japan strongly opposes any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force as well as any actions to increase tensions in the South China Sea, and has consistently supported the full enforcement of the rule of law, while focusing on ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight and ensuring the safety of sea lanes. Japan has also emphasized the importance of all the concerned parties related to the South China Sea to work toward peaceful settlement of disputes based on international law, in particular the UNCLOS.

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit held in May, G7 leaders stated that there is no legal basis for China's expansive maritime claims in the South China Sea and expressed opposition to China's militarization activities in the region. They further reaffirmed UNCLOS's important role in setting out the legal framework that governs all activities in the oceans and the seas. G7 leaders also reiterated that the award rendered by the Arbitral Tribunal on July 12, 2016, is a significant milestone, which is legally binding upon the parties to those proceedings, and a useful basis for peacefully

Large-scale, rapid outpost building in the South China Sea by China



Source: CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative/Digital Globe/MAXAR

resolving disputes between the parties. Furthermore, at the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Leaders’ Meeting held in May 2023, Prime Minister Kishida expressed opposition and serious concern about attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force or coercion in the Indo-Pacific, including the East and South China Seas, and the four leaders shared the view that they strongly oppose such attempts. At the ASEAN-Japan Summit and EAS in September, Prime Minister Kishida pointed out that militarization and coercive activities are continuing in the South China Sea, and that claims of maritime rights and activities in the sea should be conducted in accordance with the relevant provisions of UNCLOS. At the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation held in December, he reiterated serious concern over the continuation of actions that increase tensions in the South China Sea, expressing that Japan will continue to cooperate with ASEAN to address the regional and international situation.

The issue with regard to the South China Sea is directly related to the peace and stability of the region and constitutes a legitimate concern of the international community. The issue is also an important matter of concern for Japan, which depends on marine transport for much of its resources and energy and which is a stakeholder that utilizes the South China Sea. Cooperation within the international community is of great importance in maintaining and developing “Free and Open Seas” based on the rule of law. From this perspective, Japan supports the U.S. Freedom of Navigation Operations⁹ in the South China Sea.

E Measures to Combat Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships

Japan actively contributes to ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight and safe maritime transport through efforts to combat piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia and Africa as well as close partnership and cooperation with other countries.

⁹ The U.S. Government explains its “Freedom of Navigation” operations as efforts to challenge excessive claims that can infringe freedom of navigation and overflight, and the right of lawful uses of the sea. One example of this is the navigation of the U.S. Navy’s USS *Benfold* guided-missile destroyer through the waters around the Spratly Islands on September 8, 2021.

(A) Measures to Address Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia

The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP), which Japan took the initiative in formulating, entered into force in 2006. Since then, the Information Sharing Centre (ReCAAP-ISC) established in Singapore has been conducting information sharing on incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore and other regions, as well as cooperation to support capacity building. To date, Japan has been supporting the activities of ReCAAP-ISC by dispatching the Executive Directors (left office in March 2022) and Assistant Directors and making financial contributions. According to the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), while the number of cases of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the seas of Southeast Asia was 56 in 2021, 58 in 2022, and 67 in 2023, as a result of activities by ReCAAP-ISC and the contributions of the member states, the number of serious incidents, including kidnappings and assaults, has been suppressed in recent years.

(B) Measures to Address Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships Off the Coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden

According to the IMB, the number of cases of piracy and armed robbery against ships off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden, which is an important sea lane linking Asia and Europe, was 237 at its peak in 2011. It has since declined to a low level with zero or one attempted incident since 2019. However, in 2023, the first hijacking case since 2017 occurred in this region. Although this was a single case, IMB sounded the warning that this case signals the presence of entities in these areas of the ocean that have the capability to carry out acts of piracy.

Since 2009, Japan has been conducting counter-piracy operations by deploying Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyers (with coast guard officers on board) and P-3C patrol aircraft off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden. To solve the root causes of piracy in

these areas, Japan has been making multilayered efforts that include support for enhancing the maritime security capabilities of Somalia and its neighboring countries and ensuring the stability of Somalia.

(C) Measures to Address Piracy and Armed

Robbery against Ships in the Gulf of Guinea

According to IMB, the number of cases of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Gulf of Guinea increased slightly from 19 in 2022 to 22 in 2023, and it continues to be a sea area with the largest number of serious incidents in the world, resulting in multiple casualties. Strengthening maritime law enforcement capabilities among coastal states remains a key issue. To that end, Japan provides capacity building assistance to the coastal states through training programs conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and JICA, and also works with the international community through participation in meetings of the “G7++ Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea,”¹⁰ among other efforts.

F International Cooperation on Capacity Building Assistance

Amid advancing globalization, the impact of technological innovation on the global security environment, rapid changes in the military balance, including China’s growing militarization, and greater cross-border threats, no single country can protect its peace and security on its own. This is particularly true in the maritime field. Therefore, Japan is advancing efforts to strengthen its defense capabilities and maritime law enforcement capabilities, while providing capacity building assistance to various countries to support their maritime security and maritime law enforcement capabilities as well as engaging in international cooperation on Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) with the aim of maintaining and developing international maritime order, in collaboration and cooperation with its ally and like-minded countries.

Japan has been utilizing Official Development Assistance (ODA) in these cooperative efforts. At the IISS Shangri-la Dialogue in 2022, Prime Minister Kishida stated that Japan will make use of technical

¹⁰ G7++FoGG comprises G7 countries, non-G7 countries and international organizations.

cooperation, training, and other means conducive to strengthening the maritime law enforcement capabilities of at least 20 countries to promote efforts to train at least 800 maritime security personnel and strengthen their human resources network over a three-year period until 2025, including through sharing Japan's knowledge and experience on advanced technologies, such as satellites, artificial intelligence (AI) and unmanned aerial vehicles, with other countries. Additionally, he pledged to provide at least approximately 2 billion U.S. dollars in assistance, such as the provision of maritime security equipment including patrol vessels and development of maritime transportation infrastructure, to Indo-Pacific countries. He also stated that Japan will strengthen support to Indo-Pacific countries, utilizing the Quad and international organizations and so forth. In 2023, trainings were conducted in Japan and overseas for more than 600 officials of coast guard authorities and relevant agencies of 23 countries. Japan also decided to provide a large patrol vessel, which will be built at a Japanese shipyard, to the Indonesian Coast Guard Agency under the grant aid project, "The Project for Enhancement of Ability in Maritime Safety and Security." Through its support toward the Maritime Law Enforcement Capacity Building Project implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) under its Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP), Japan also develops training courses and conducts training and workshops related to measures against illegal maritime activities in the target countries.

To provide capacity building assistance to coast guard authorities of coastal states of the Indo-Pacific, the Japan Coast Guard dispatches highly skilled Japan Coast Guard officials with expert knowledge as well as the Japan Coast Guard Mobile Cooperation Team (MCT), a special team that provides foreign coast guard authorities with capacity building (including through the GMCP framework). The Japan Coast Guard also invites foreign coast guard officials to Japan to train them under the "Maritime Safety and Security Policy Program." In addition, Japan provides capacity building support in areas, such as warship maintenance

and diving medicine, to the militaries of the Indo-Pacific countries, and conducts training on board Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) vessels for young naval officers of ASEAN member states.

Furthermore, Official Security Assistance (OSA), newly established in 2023, positions maritime security as one of the priority areas, and aims to strengthen security and deterrence capabilities by providing materials and equipment as well as assistance for infrastructure development to the armed forces and other related organizations of friendly countries. In 2023, Japan decided to provide the Philippines with coastal radar systems, Bangladesh with patrol boats, Malaysia with monitoring and surveillance equipment (such as rescue boats), and Fiji with patrol boats and other related equipment through OSA (See the Special Feature on page 219).

When providing such assistance, Japan coordinates with its ally and like-minded countries, aligning its assistance with the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA)¹¹ of the Quad, and sharing MDA information based on its memorandum of cooperation with each country.

(5) Outer Space

In June, Japan revised its Basic Plan on Space Policy for the first time in three years and formulated a new Space Security Initiative. The Space Security Initiative sets out specific challenges and policies in the field of space security, incorporates measures to be taken for space security during the next decade, and covers efforts to maintain the stable use of and free access to outer space jointly with Japan's ally and like-minded countries.

In recent years, outer space has become more congested due to its diversified use and an increasing number of countries using space. In addition, the increase of space debris due to factors such as anti-satellite (ASAT) tests poses a growing risk to the sustainable and stable use of outer space. In order to cope with this situation, Japan has been engaging in initiatives such as strengthening Space Situational Awareness (SSA) and mission assurance for space systems. Japan has also been working on international rule-making and international space cooperation.

¹¹ A maritime domain awareness initiative designed to respond to humanitarian and natural disasters and counter illegal fishery in cooperation with regional partners. It was announced at the Quad Leaders' Meeting held in Tokyo in May 2022.

Establishment of Official Security Assistance (OSA) Framework

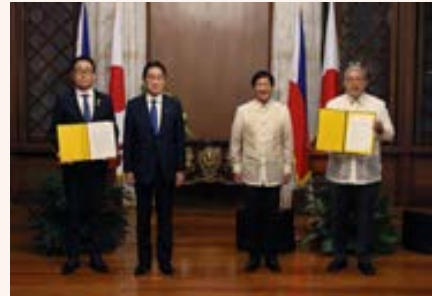
As Japan is finding itself in the midst of the most severe and complex security environment since the end of World War II, it is essential for Japan to drastically strengthen its own defense capabilities as well as enhance the security and deterrence capabilities of like-minded countries in order to prevent unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, ensure the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific region in particular, and create a security environment desirable for Japan. From this perspective, in 2023, Japan established a new cooperation framework “Official Security Assistance (OSA),” apart from “Official Development Assistance (ODA)” which aims for the economic and social development of developing countries.

Under the OSA framework, Japan will provide equipment and supplies as well as assistance for the development of infrastructure for the benefit of the armed forces and related organizations of the countries. By enhancing their security and deterrence capabilities, OSA aims to deepen Japan’s security cooperation with the countries, to create a desirable security environment for Japan, and to contribute to maintaining and strengthening international peace and security. The policy for OSA is set out in the National Security Strategy approved by the Cabinet on December 16, 2022. On April 5, 2023, the Implementation Guidelines for Japan’s OSA were decided and announced at the National Security Council.

An important premise behind OSA is to continue firmly maintaining Japan’s basic philosophy as a peace-loving nation, and to respond to the security needs of recipient countries. For this reason, the Implementation Guidelines prescribe the following principles, among others: (1) Implemented within the framework of the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology and its Implementation Guidelines; (2) Implemented only in fields not directly relating to any international conflict; (3) Conformity with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. Based on these Implementation Guidelines, Japan will provide support toward activities that contribute to enhancing capabilities for ensuring peace, stability, and security based on the rule of law (monitoring and surveillance in territorial waters and airspace, counter-terrorism and counter-piracy, etc.), humanitarian activities (disaster response, search and rescue, medical care, enhancing transportation capabilities for relief goods, etc.), and international peace cooperation operations (capacity building to participate in Peacekeeping operations (PKO), etc.).

When implementing OSA, from the perspective of ensuring its appropriateness and transparency, Japan will ensure the following: appropriate information disclosure, assessment and monitoring of the programme and disclosure of information on its results, proper management of the provided assistance including prohibition of extra-purpose use and transfer to third parties. Furthermore, OSA will be implemented in close coordination with related organizations including the National Security Secretariat, and the Ministry of Defense.

In the first year of OSA implementation in FY2023 (as of December 31), Japan decided that assistance will be provided to the Philippines, Malaysia, Bangladesh, and Fiji, which play an important role in the peace and security of the region. Of these, the exchange of notes on projects for the Philippines and Malaysia was carried out in the presence of Prime Minister Kishida, President Marcos of the Philippines, and Prime Minister Anwar of Malaysia, respectively. Assistance to these four countries is aimed at contributing to enhancing surveillance capabilities in the field of maritime security, and specifically, involves the provision of coastal radar systems to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, patrol boats to Bangladeshi Navy, rescue boats and other relevant equipment to the Malaysian Armed Forces, and patrol boats and other relevant equipment to Fiji Navy. Going forward, MOFA will continue to work with the relevant ministries and agencies to ensure that OSA achieves meaningful outcomes that contribute to its purposes.



Prime Minister Kishida and President Marcos of the Philippines participating in the exchange of notes for OSA to the Philippines (November 3, Manila, Philippines; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

In May, Japan, as the G7 Presidency, incorporated the importance of addressing the issues of space debris and the commitment not to conduct destructive, direct-ascent ASAT missile testing into the G7 Hiroshima Leaders' Communiqué for the first time in a G7 communiqué.

A Realization of the Rule of Law in Outer Space

The international community has been vigorously discussing international rule-making concerning outer space activities in a variety of ways. Japan has also been actively involved in these efforts toward realizing the rule of law in outer space.

The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), a permanent committee established under the UN General Assembly, plays an important role in international rule-making related to civil space activities.

Apart from the Committee, which engages in comprehensive discussions, COPUOS has the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, which conducts reviews on issues related to space activities from scientific and technical aspects, and the Legal Subcommittee, which discusses legal matters arising from space activities.

At the session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee convened in February, active discussions were held on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, in addition to individual themes, such as space debris and remote sensing.

At the session of the Legal Subcommittee convened in March, discussions were held on issues related to the definition of outer space and equitable access to the geostationary satellite orbit, as well as on Space Traffic Management (STM) and space resources, which have been attracting more attention in recent years. In particular, with reference to space resources, intensive discussions were held on how international rules regarding space resources should be at the Working Group on Space Resources, newly established under the Legal Subcommittee in 2021 (chaired by Professor AOKI Setsuko of Keio University Law School).

With regard to the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS), the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG), established based on the resolution on “Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours” jointly proposed

by Japan, the UK, and other countries in 2021, convened four sessions until September. Active discussions were held on the international laws applied to outer space, and the threats, responsible or irresponsible behaviors in outer space. However, the report was not adopted due to objection from one country. Separately, the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) established through a proposal by Russia in 2022, was held in Geneva in November. Furthermore, at the meeting of the UN's First Committee held in October, it was decided that an OEWG on “responsible behaviours” proposed by the UK would be convened from 2025 to 2026, and that another OEWG on PAROS proposed by Russia would be convened from 2024 to 2028.

In addition, with a view to contributing to the rule of law in outer space, Japan announced in 2021 that it would cooperate with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) on its “Space Law for New Space Actors” project and has since been offering support to emerging space-faring nations in the Asia Pacific region for the development and implementation of domestic space-related laws. In 2023, Japan provided legal capacity building support with a focus on the supervision as well as authorization and licensing of space activities. In June, in collaboration with 11 participating countries of the “National Space Legislation Initiative (NSLI)” of the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAP), Japan compiled a joint report summarizing efforts of each country in developing and operating national space legislation, and submitted it to UN COPUOS to share the findings of each country.

B International Dialogues and Consultations on Outer Space

Japan promotes dialogues and consultations on outer space primarily with major space-faring nations and nations in the Asia-Pacific region.

In particular, in 2023, Japan held the Japan-France Comprehensive Dialogue on Space for the first time in six years and the Japan-EU Space Policy Dialogue for the first time in four years in January, as well as the Japan-U.S. Comprehensive Dialogue on Space for the first time in three years in March. In addition to information on the space policies of each side, they also exchanged views on a wide range of subjects, including

security cooperation and inter-agency cooperation (See page 199, 2(2) D on relations with the U.S.).

As part of the efforts under the Quad (Japan-Australia-India-U.S.), Japan organized capacity building support (such as responding to extreme precipitation events) to third countries through workshops and other efforts, utilizing the working group on space established at the Quad Summit Meeting held in 2021. At the Quad Leaders' Meeting held in May 2023, the four leaders recognized the importance of space technologies and space-related applications in the fields of climate change, disasters and oceans.

With regard to multilateral meetings, the 29th session of the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF-29), co-organized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), and the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) of Indonesia, was held in September. At this Forum, discussions were held on expanding the space industry, promoting sustainable space activities for the future, and contributing to the resolution of social issues.

C International Space Exploration and the International Space Station (ISS)

The progress of space exploration and application for peaceful purposes is a common benefit for all humankind, and is also of diplomatic significance.

In 2019, Japan decided to participate in the Artemis Program, a U.S.-led international space exploration program. In 2020, with the Artemis Program in mind, eight countries, including Japan and the U.S., signed the Artemis Accords, which set out a political commitment to establish principles for creating a safe and transparent environment in promoting outer space activities. Thereafter, more countries signed the Artemis Accords, and the number of signatories increased to 33 countries as of the end of December 2023.

In April, the Governments of Japan and the U.S. signed the Exchange of Notes between the Government of Japan and the Government of the United States of

America for the Martian Moons eXploration (MMX) mission, which aims to bring back samples from a Martian moon to Earth.

Furthermore, in January, the Governments of Japan and the U.S. signed the Framework Agreement between Japan and the United States of America for Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, which is a new legal framework to further facilitate Japan-U.S. space cooperation, represented by the exploration and use of outer space. This Agreement entered into force in June (See the Special Feature on page 222).

Japan has been providing human resource development programs (robot programming, physics and plant experiments, etc.) to the Asia Pacific region through the Kibo-ABC Initiative¹² established under the APRSAF, utilizing the Japanese Experiment Module “Kibo” on the ISS to support capacity building in the space field. In June, Japan conducted a protein crystal growth experiment in collaboration with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) onboard Kibo/ISS. Japan also provides emerging space-faring nations with the opportunity to deploy nanosatellites through the KiboCUBE program¹³, a collaborative framework implemented with the UNOOSA, and the open call for the 8th KiboCUBE was announced in June. Under this program, the Central American Integration System (SICA), Mexico and Tunisia are developing satellites for deployment.

D Addressing Global Issues through the Utilization of Space Technology

Amidst rising expectations of space technology's potential in resolving global issues in recent years, Japan has been promoting international cooperation based on the utilization of its internationally superior space technologies, and contributing toward the achievement of the SDGs.

For example, Japan provides, at no charge, the Global Satellite Mapping of Precipitation (GSMaP) system, which utilizes multiple satellites to observe the global rainfall situation. This system is applied to a wide

¹² Kibo-ABC (Asian Beneficial Collaboration through “Kibo” Utilization) initiative: An initiative aimed at promoting the use of the ISS/Japanese Experiment Module – Kibo in the Asia Pacific region, and the sharing of its values.

¹³ A program that provides selected organizations with the opportunity to deploy nanosatellites from the ISS/Japanese Experiment Module – Kibo, with the aim of contributing to improving space-related technologies in emerging space-faring nations.

SPECIAL
FEATURE

Path Leading Up to the Conclusion of the Framework Agreement between Japan and the United States of America for Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space

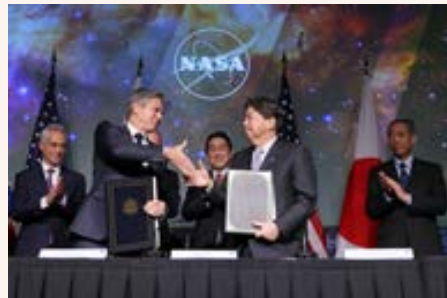
Have you ever thought about traveling all the way to the Moon or Mars? Japan has been participating in the Artemis Program, a U.S.-led international lunar exploration program, and aims to realize the landing of a Japanese astronaut on the Moon by the late 2020s. Today, various countries are planning space exploration, including on the Moon. As such, we can say that the world has truly entered a new era of space exploration.

Japan plans to cooperate on many projects with the U.S., including on the development and operation of lunar exploration equipment and astronauts' lunar surface activities. We also expect that cooperation will be further expanded to include a wide range of areas, such as space science and earth observation. In this context, there was a growing need for a new legal framework to facilitate such cooperation even more swiftly and smoothly. To that end, negotiations commenced on the Framework Agreement between Japan and the United States of America for Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space.

This Agreement sets out the basic matters related to space cooperation to establish a framework that enables the implementation of individual cooperative activities by implementing agencies of Japan and the U.S., including the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and other space-related agencies. For that purpose, during the negotiations for this Agreement, both sides diligently discussed the legal framework necessary for future Japan-U.S. space cooperation and norms for safe and sustainable space activities, looking ahead to scenarios in which Japanese and U.S. astronauts jointly conduct lunar exploration. Some examples include provisions on the jurisdiction over personnel in outer space when engaging in cooperation, and provisions related to planetary protection and mitigation of space debris. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, negotiations had to be conducted online for some time. Eventually, after multiple in-person negotiations while wearing masks, the negotiations culminated in a fruitful result.

On January 13, Foreign Minister Hayashi and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken signed this Agreement in Washington, D.C. (U.S.). Prime Minister Kishida, who attended the signing ceremony, stated that he strongly expects this Agreement to vigorously promote Japan-U.S. space cooperation and expand areas of cooperation for the Japan-U.S. alliance, which is stronger than ever before.

This Agreement subsequently entered into force in June following the completion of domestic procedures within both Japan and the U.S. This Agreement is expected to further promote space cooperation between the two countries, including the Artemis Program. Furthermore, through their cooperation under this Agreement, Japan and the U.S. are expected to contribute to creating international rules on space activities by implementing safe and sustainable space activities.



The Signing Ceremony of the Framework Agreement between Japan and the United States of America for Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space (January 13, Washington, D.C., U.S.; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

range of uses, including rainfall situation monitoring, disaster management and agriculture, in 150 countries and regions around the world. Furthermore, Japan took the lead in launching “Sentinel Asia,” an initiative to provide free observational satellite information during disasters to contribute to disaster management in the Asia-Pacific region. To date, this project has responded to more than 430 emergency requests from 36 countries. Japan also holds workshops for those who are involved in disaster readiness and response, and contributes to capacity building in the utilization of satellite data during disasters in Asian countries.

In addition, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), in collaboration with JAXA, hosted 16 officials from space-related agencies of 12 countries in Japan from August to September for training to enhance their ability to utilize space technology to contribute to the SDGs. In September and October, JICA also started technical cooperation projects in Rwanda and Paraguay respectively, to improve the organizational and technological capacity of their space agencies (scheduled to last for two years each). In addition, JICA is promoting response to global issues through the use of space technologies in diverse fields, such as the use of satellite technology, under the REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries) initiative.

(6) Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding

The international community is still experiencing regional and domestic conflicts as a result of various factors including differences in race, religion, and history, or due to the impact of poverty and disparity. In recent years, the protracted nature of these conflicts has particularly become a challenging problem. For this reason, in addition to post-conflict peacekeeping through the dispatch of UN Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) and other means, peacebuilding efforts that take into consideration building a foundation for development have become an important issue for preventing conflicts and their recurrence, as well as realizing post-conflict nation-building and sustaining peace.

In recent years, there have been concerns about the impact of conflicts, as well as new risks such as climate

change and infectious diseases, on peace and stability, necessitating a more unified approach. As issues facing the international community become more complex and diverse, peacebuilding initiatives are becoming increasingly important, as signaled by UN Secretary-General Guterres’ call to Member States to strengthen peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts in the “New Agenda for Peace” published in July 2023.

A On-the-Ground Initiatives

(A) UN Peacekeeping Operations (UN PKO)

As of December 31, 2023, 11 UN PKO missions are on active duty, primarily in the Middle East and Africa, to handle a wide range of duties that include monitoring cease-fires, promoting political processes, and protecting civilians. More than 80,000 military, police, and civilian personnel have been deployed to these missions. In response to the increasing complexity and scale of the mandates and the associated shortages of personnel, equipment, and financial resources, discussions on more effective and efficient implementation of UN PKO are underway in various fora including the UN.

In addition to PKO missions, the UN has also established Special Political Missions (SPMs) mainly consisting of civilian personnel. SPMs fulfill diverse roles including the peaceful settlement of disputes, post-conflict peacebuilding, and conflict prevention.

Based on the Act on Cooperation with UN Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations (PKO Act), Japan has dispatched more than 12,500 personnel to a total of 29 missions since 1992, including UN PKO missions. Most recently, since 2011, Japanese staff officers have been dispatched to the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), while engineering units have been deployed there from 2012. The engineering units undertook such activities as developing infrastructure and providing water supplies to displaced persons, and concluded their activities in May 2017. As of December 31, 2023, four Self-Defense Forces of Japan (SDF) officers are on active duty at the UNMISS Headquarters, who continue to work toward peace and stability in the country. Additionally, since 2019, Japan has been conducting activities contributing to peace and stability in the Middle East by dispatching SDF officers to the Headquarters for the Multinational Force

and Observers (MFO) stationed on the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, where four SDF officers are on active duty as of December 31, 2023. Leveraging its own strengths, Japan will continue to contribute proactively in the field of international peace cooperation in the future by means such as enhancing capacity building support and dispatching units and individuals.

(B) ODA and Other Cooperation to Facilitate Peacebuilding

In addressing conflicts and humanitarian crises, peacebuilding and preventing the recurrence of conflict even in peacetime, in addition to humanitarian assistance and development cooperation, are important toward the realization of an inclusive society. With the number of refugees and displaced persons in the world exceeding 100 million people for the first time in 2022, there is a greater need than before to address the root causes of crises through assistance for self-reliant development by building resilient nations and stabilizing societies from a medium- to long-term perspective. Japan clearly set out the “Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDP Nexus)”¹⁴ approach in its Development Cooperation Charter revised in June 2023. At the Second Global Refugee Forum (GRF) held in December, Foreign Minister Kamikawa expressed Japan’s resolve to play a leadership role in advancing this approach while cooperating with the international community to address the unprecedented humanitarian crisis, including support for peacebuilding.

a. Middle East

Japan has provided comprehensive support for peace and stability in the Middle East. This includes providing food and refugee assistance, as well as support for the development of human resources who can play an active role in nation-building. As for Palestine, in addition to an increase in the refugee population, it is also facing serious deterioration of the living environment, including the deteriorating refugee camp infrastructure as well as unemployment and poverty. Japan worked on

improving the living environment of refugees through the implementation of the Camp Improvement Project (CIP) at refugee camps in Palestine, as well as by providing support to educational facilities, and contributed to the stabilization and improvement of the people’s welfare based on human security.

b. Africa

At the Eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 8) in 2022, Japan presented its view of working with African countries to bring about a peaceful and stable Africa. Japan also expressed its intention to strongly support the promotion of the rule of law as well as Africa’s own efforts for return to constitutional order and consolidated democracy, and announced the appointment of an Ambassador, Special Envoy for the “Horn of Africa”¹⁵. Under the New Approach for Peace and Stability in Africa (NAPSA) proposed at TICAD 7 in 2019, Japan, even after TICAD 8, has continued to respect Africa’s ownership while providing support for African-led efforts toward peace and stability through consolidating democracy and promoting the rule of law, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and support toward strengthening the foundations of the community.

For example, Japan has conducted criminal justice training since 2014 for Francophone African countries, and has supported stabilization of the Sahel region by strengthening the capabilities of investigative and judicial bodies. Japan has also provided African countries with security equipment to improve their ability to maintain security against frequent terrorist attacks and transnational crimes, and provided support for landmine clearance.

In South Sudan, along with dispatching personnel to UNMISS Headquarters, in response to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS)¹⁶ signed in 2018, Japan has been supporting the implementation of the agreement and cease-fire monitoring through the Intergovernmental Authority on Development

¹⁴ Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDP Nexus): An approach that combines short-term “humanitarian aid” with the medium- to long-term efforts of “development cooperation” to support refugees in gaining independence and reducing the burden on host countries, as well as “peace initiatives” toward resolving and preventing conflicts, which are the root causes that create refugees.

¹⁵ The “Horn of Africa” refers to the region on the northeastern part of the African continent that protrudes in the shape of a horn toward the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. It encompasses the countries of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya.

¹⁶ As the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan signed in 2015 stalled as a result of clashes in July 2016, the parties involved entered into an agreement (R-ARCSS) once again on establishing an interim government, cease-fire measures, the holding of elections, and other efforts to resolve the conflict.

(IGAD), a regional organization in East Africa, as well as other organizations. Furthermore, Japan, in collaboration with the UNDP, has disbursed a total of 65 million U.S. dollars between 2008 and 2023 to Peacekeeping Training Centers located in 14 African countries, contributing to strengthening Africa's capacity for peacekeeping activities.

B Initiatives within the UN

Against the backdrop of the growing awareness within the international community of the need for peacebuilding efforts, the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) was established based on UN Security Council resolution 1645 and a General Assembly resolution of 2005, as an advisory body to the UN Security Council and General Assembly, with the aim of providing consistent advice on assistance, from conflict resolution to recovery, reintegration and reconstruction. In addition to conducting discussions on the approach to peacebuilding in countries and regions, the PBC also engages in discussions on themes such as Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). In recent years, there have been increasing opportunities for the PBC to fulfill its advisory function to the UN Security Council and General Assembly.

Japan has consistently served as a member of the Organizational Committee since the PBC's establishment, advocating the importance of investments in institution building and people from the viewpoint that it is necessary to adopt an approach based on the HDP Nexus, in order to realize resilient and sustainable peace.

Japan has contributed a total of 63.07 million U.S. dollars to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)¹⁷ as of December 31, 2023, and as a major donor country, also actively supports the execution of projects implemented by UN agencies in Africa and other regions.

Japan continues to address peacebuilding as one of its priorities during its two-year term on the UN Security Council starting from January 2023. It hosted an Open Debate on peacebuilding during its Presidency of the UN Security Council in January 2023, focusing not only on Ukraine, but also various

challenges faced by the so-called "Global South." The debate also emphasized the role of people in building and sustaining peace, and underscored the importance of strengthening the UN's functions through means such as utilization of the PBC by the UN Security Council. Representatives from 74 countries delivered statements at this Debate, and many countries supported Japan's views.

Furthermore, Japan has been engaging in efforts in the area of peacebuilding in cooperation with other members of the UN Security Council. For example, the ministerial-level Open Debate on peacebuilding during Switzerland's Presidency of the UN Security Council in May was attended by Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs AKIMOTO Masatoshi, representing Japan. He stressed the importance of human security through investing in people, and also spoke about the role that the UN Security Council should play in regard to peacebuilding. In addition, Japan, Guyana, and Mozambique co-hosted a meeting in January 2024 based on the theme "Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace through Comprehensive Approaches—Investment in People, including Empowerment of Women." During this meeting, Japan actively communicated its position, bringing up the importance of investing in people, including the empowerment of women, in peacebuilding. In these ways, Japan has been stimulating discussions not only as a PBC member state, but also in UN fora as a member of the UN Security Council, in order to prompt in-depth sharing on the importance of peacebuilding efforts.

C Human Resource Development

(A) The Program for Global Human Resource Development for Peacebuilding and Development

Human resource development for highly skilled civilian experts with expertise presents a challenge in the field of post-conflict peacebuilding. Japan has been implementing a human resource development program in order to cultivate people who can play a leading role in the field. As of the end of 2023, more than 900 people have been trained. The participants

¹⁷ A fund established in October 2006 to provide support to regions, including Africa, for stopping the recurrence of regional conflicts and civil wars after they have ended as well as preventing conflicts. Specifically, the fund supports peace processes and political dialogues, economic revitalization, institution building for nations, and the participation by women and youth in nation-building, among other initiatives.

who complete the program go on to play an active role in the field of peacebuilding and development in Asia, Africa, and other parts of the world, and have received high acclaim from different countries. Out of the 215 participants who have completed the training course (primary course) for entry-level human resources, 113 work in international organizations (as regular staff, as well as JPO, UN volunteers, and consultants). Hence, this program also contributes significantly to the career development of Japanese nationals, as well as the enhancement of their presence in international organizations in the fields of peacebuilding and development. In 2023, the primary course and a training course for mid-career professionals with experience in the fields of peacebuilding and development were conducted (See the Column on page 227).

(B) Training for Peacekeepers of Various Countries
Japan has been supporting peacekeepers from various countries participating in UN PKO to enhance their capabilities. Since 2015, in conjunction with cooperative efforts among the UN, supporting member states, and troop contributing countries, Japan has contributed financially to the Triangular Partnership Programme (TPP), a framework for innovative cooperation aimed at addressing the urgent need to improve the capabilities of PKO personnel by providing necessary training and equipment. Japan has also dispatched SDF personnel and other individuals as instructors. To date, Japan has conducted training on the operation of heavy engineering equipment for 312 personnel from eight African countries that expressed intentions to dispatch engineering units to UN PKO. In 2018, the TPP was extended to include Asia and the surrounding regions, and Japan conducted training in Viet Nam and Indonesia. Since October 2019, Japan has also started a lifesaving training program in the medical field, a considerably problematic area for UN PKO, while support for the introduction of telemedicine into UN PKO missions was launched from 2021. In 2023, Japan dispatched one SDF medical officer to the UN Field Medical Assistants Course (UNFMAC) held in Uganda in July. Japan has dispatched as many as 317

SDF personnel and other individuals as instructors for the operation of heavy engineering equipment and in the field of medicine. Furthermore, Japan decided in 2023 to contribute approximately 8.5 million U.S. dollars to expand the TPP and conduct training for personnel dispatched for peace support activities led by the African Union (AU). Other than TPP, Japan dispatches instructors and other personnel, as well as providing financial assistance, to Peacekeeping Training Centers in Asia and Africa.

(7) Initiatives to Combat Security Threats

Ensuring public security and protecting the lives of the people are the premise of various socioeconomic activities and the basic responsibilities of a country. To cope effectively with security threats such as international terrorism and organized crime, which are rapidly becoming more complex and severe in tandem with social changes such as the advancement of science and technology and the spread of COVID-19, it is vital for the international community to cooperate as a whole.

A Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism

Since the end of 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased people's reliance on information and communications technology. It has also had a major impact on the environment surrounding terrorism. Terrorists continue to carry out their terrorist activities in Asia and other parts of the world while adapting to the new social circumstances that have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the weakening of governance as well as social divisions brought about by the manifestation of poverty and racial and ethnic issues. Furthermore, the spread of extremism or recruiting through the Internet and social media, as well as the tendency of acquiring funding for terrorism by using crypto-assets and other means, have become more conspicuous. In October 2023, Japan, as the G7 Presidency, hosted the G7 Roma-Lyon Group Meeting¹⁸ in Tokyo. In conjunction with this meeting, Japan invited the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT)¹⁹ to attend, with a view

¹⁸ A framework to facilitate discussions among G7 experts on how to respond to priority issues in efforts to counter international terrorism and international organized crime. It provides opportunities for reaching a common position within the G7. Results of discussions are fed back into G7 leaders and ministerial meetings.

¹⁹ A private-sector forum established by IT companies for the purpose of jointly preventing the spread of terrorism and violent extremism on the Internet.

Participating in the Program for Global Human Resource Development for Peacebuilding and Development

**KOJIMA Hideaki, Associate Field Officer (UN Volunteer),
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the Republic of Moldova**

I am KOJIMA Hideaki, a trainee in the Program for Global Human Resource Development for Peacebuilding and Development, commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Through this program, I work as a UN Volunteer at the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Moldova.

Do you know of a country called Moldova? Located on the edge of Europe, Moldova has a history of always being at the mercy of its powerful neighbors, and even today, is known as the poorest country in Europe. Moldova currently hosts about 110,000 refugees who have fled from Ukraine, making up approximately 4% of its total population. Accepting such a large number of refugees is particularly difficult for this small country that is not endowed with abundant financial and human resources. UNHCR's mission is to protect refugees and resolve refugee issues under the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention) and other agreements. It engages in a wide range of activities, including distributing cash and relief supplies, providing legal and physical protection to refugees who have fled to Moldova, and offering technical and material assistance to the government of Moldova.

When I first took up the position in Moldova as a member of the field team, I often visited the border between Moldova and Ukraine, the Refugee Accommodation Centres (RACs), local organizations providing assistance, and other places to conduct interviews on problems faced by refugees as well as their needs, and to provide necessary responses. Currently, I am working as a member of the inter-agency coordination team. In a refugee situation, various stakeholders are involved in humanitarian assistance, including government agencies, UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and international/national NGOs. The role of the inter-agency coordination team is to take the lead together with the government of the host country to decide on a response plan for assistance activities, encourage all the relevant organizations to conduct their activities in line with this plan, and ensure that assistance is provided equitably to everyone in need without duplication. Within this team, I am responsible for the Local Refugee Coordination Forums set up in seven cities in Moldova. My job is to bridge between regional actors providing support to refugees with the country-level actors, such as facilitating collaboration among aid organizations in each region, identifying region-specific challenges, flagging the challenges to relevant agencies or the country-level refugee coordination structure, and to address these problems. As a member of UNHCR, I also led the inter-agency winterization taskforce to assess winter needs among people before the long and harsh winter in Moldova, and develop a winterization plan. This year, in addition to providing cash assistance, we are reinforcing infrastructure for the houses of economically vulnerable households and community facilities in rural cities.

Having experienced working here first-hand, I see every day how even UN agencies such as UNHCR are faced with many limitations in their activities. Nevertheless, it is a very rewarding job that gives me the opportunity to hear directly from refugees and host communities about difficulties they face, think about what solutions UNHCR can offer, and be involved in formulating policies to assist refugees. It has been my dream since high school to work in UNHCR to support refugees who have been denied their rights and threatened their safety. That is why I feel fortunate to have the chance to actually work in UNHCR today. Every day, I learn from my colleagues who have a wealth of experience from their previous missions in various humanitarian crises, and one day, I hope to become a humanitarian professional just like them.



Workshop to formulate the Refugee Response Plan (the author is in the center)



With the Ambassador of Japan to Moldova and the UNHCR Representative in the Republic of Moldova at a Refugee Accommodation Centre (the author is first from the left of the front row)

to deepening discussions on countering online terrorism, including measures to address terrorist contents.

Based on the “G7 Action Plan on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism” compiled at the G7 Ise-Shima Summit in 2016, Japan has to date implemented the following actions: (1) measures to enhance counter-terrorism capacity, which include promoting the utilization of Interpol databases and measures against the funding of terrorism, (2) education and promotion of moderation in communities through dialogues and other means, in order to prevent violent extremism, which is a root cause of terrorism, and (3) support for capacity building of law enforcement agencies, including measures to support rehabilitation in prisons. In addition to these efforts, Japan, in order to steadily promote measures to counter terrorism and violent extremism mainly in Southeast Asia, has been implementing projects with various organizations including the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Interpol, and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), among others, by using their advantages and expertise respectively.

As an initiative that Japan has carried out continuously for the past 20 years, Japan has also run an exchange program inviting Islamic school teachers from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Philippines and providing opportunities to experience interfaith dialogue, intercultural exchanges, and visit educational sites in Japan. While this was suspended in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program was resumed in 2022. Japan will continue to implement the program going forward, in order to help promote moderation and the creation of more tolerant societies that are receptive to different values.

Through bilateral and trilateral counter-terrorism consultations and the Quad (Japan-Australia-India-U.S.) Counter-Terrorism Working Group, among other initiatives, Japan also exchanges information on terrorism situations and affirms the strengthening of partnerships, while developing practical cooperation with other countries.

Based on the view that information gathering is critical for countering terrorism, the Government of Japan established the Counter Terrorism Unit - Japan (CTU-J) in December 2015 and has been making concerted efforts to gather information with the Prime Minister's

Office serving as the control tower. To fulfill the critical responsibility of securing the safety of Japanese nationals overseas, Japan will continue to further enhance its information gathering through the CTU-J and take all possible measures to counter terrorism to ensure the safety of Japanese nationals overseas.

B Criminal Justice Initiatives

The UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (“Congress”) (both of which have their secretariats under UNODC) are in charge of shaping policy on crime prevention and criminal justice in the international community. In March 2021, the 14th Congress (“Kyoto Congress”) was convened in Kyoto. In accordance with the overall theme, “Advancing crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law: toward the achievement of the 2030 Agenda,” the political declaration (“Kyoto Declaration”), summarizing the matters that should be addressed over the medium- to long-term by the international community in the areas of crime prevention and criminal justice, was adopted. Since then, in cooperation with UNODC and other organizations, Japan has been demonstrating its leadership in advancing such initiatives as; (1) regularly convening the Criminal Justice Forum for Asia and the Pacific as a platform for information sharing and exchanges of opinions between practitioners in the field of criminal justice in the Asia-Pacific region; (2) regularly holding the Global Youth Forum for a Culture of Lawfulness, with the aim of facilitating independent discussions among youths, and incorporating their views into policies; (3) working toward the formulation of UN model strategies to promote efforts by the international community to reduce reoffending. In addition, Japan proactively engages in following up on the Kyoto Declaration through efforts such as supporting theme-based discussions on the Kyoto Declaration conducted by UNODC.

At the session of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice convened in May 2023, Japan submitted a draft resolution to continue following up on the Kyoto Declaration, and this resolution was adopted unanimously. As a result, the outcomes of the Kyoto Congress will be carried on to the 15th Congress (hosted by United Arab Emirates) in 2026 (See the Column on page 229).

Serving as a Rapporteur (Reporter) at a UN Conference

**YAMAZAKI Jun, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Japan
to the International Organizations in Vienna**

“**R**apporteur, please explain the draft report.” It is 1:30 a.m. at night on Saturday, May 27, on a podium at the 32nd session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ). As the Rapporteur who was prompted by the Chair, I turned on the microphone and started speaking.

● Who is the Rapporteur (Reporter)?

A Rapporteur is a person who compiles and reports on the contents and results of the discussions at a conference. In my case, I was assigned to summarize in a report the discussions at the 32nd session of the CCPCJ, held over a week from Monday, May 22 to Friday, May 26. Usually, a Rapporteur explains a report at a meeting held on Friday afternoon, and the report becomes official after it has been adopted unanimously.

● Run, Rapporteur!

The main themes for the week were “enhancing the functioning of the criminal justice system to ensure access to justice” and the “implementation status of the Kyoto Declaration, which is the outcome document of the Kyoto Congress.”¹ My job was to summarize the views presented by the participating countries on these themes. As the Rapporteur, I had to compile the report by Friday, so I prepared the draft with the help of the CCPCJ Secretariat. A Rapporteur is only an official of this meeting, or in other words, an official of the UN that is separate from my position as an official of the Government of Japan. At the same time, I was also a member of the delegation from the Government of Japan attending this meeting. Therefore, I was fulfilling two roles at the same time: drafting a report in my role as a UN official, while participating in negotiations on the resolution, supporting officials who were visiting from Tokyo, and preparing for the side events hosted by Japan as a member of the government delegation from Japan. I was constantly busy and running around. Even the diplomats from other countries remarked, “You’re everywhere, just like a ninja.” For example, I received a call from the Secretariat asking, “Where are you, Jun? We want to discuss how to write the report.” Then, the ninja hurried off to meet with the Secretariat. Once the discussion ended, the ninja returned to providing support on the ground as a member of the Japanese delegation. After that, the Secretariat called me again. Simply put, I was always running throughout this one-week period.

When preparing the report, I encountered the difficult problem of how to incorporate statements made by a certain country that seemed to be critical of other countries, even if the countries targeted were not explicitly named. Since it is a fact that the statements had been made, not including them in the report would lead to opposition from that country. On the other hand, the countries that had been criticized would also not remain silent if these statements were incorporated. Therefore, I referred to the writing style of past reports and used as moderate wording as possible.

The draft report was shared with the participating countries on Thursday afternoon so that they could review it. Then, on the night of the same day, I received queries asking, “Jun, what is the meaning of this?” from the representing officials of the countries that had been criticized in the statements made by the abovementioned country. I hurried off again, meeting the representative officials from these countries individually, explaining the contents to them, and seeking their understanding.

Friday finally came. This time, however, negotiations on the resolution hit a deadlock, and it became impossible to tell when the negotiations would reach their conclusion. As the resolution forms a part of the report, the report could not be adopted until the resolution was finalized. When the resolution was eventually finalized, it was past midnight. Thus, after the chaos settled, I finally made it to the podium at 1:30 a.m. on Saturday, May 27.



The author explaining the report (1:30 a.m. on Saturday, May 27, Vienna, Austria. The author is on the right end of the podium, shown on the screen)

● Toward the adoption of the report

“Does anyone have comments on the draft report explained by the Rapporteur?” the Chair asked the attendees. His question was followed by a comfortable silence. To my surprise, not even one country asked to speak! The sound of the Chair pounding his gavel echoed across the room, and the draft report was successfully adopted as the official report at about 2:00 a.m. on Saturday. After the conference, I heard from the Secretariat that it was the first time in CCPCJ’s history, spanning more than 30 years, that the report had been adopted without a single amendment. Both the Chair and the Secretariat were pleased, and the participating countries also expressed their appreciation. I may have worked steadily and earnestly, just like a “ninja” who never stood out, but everyone had witnessed my hard work and efforts. I hope that my work as a Rapporteur contributed to boosting Japan’s presence in the international community.

¹ The United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (typically referred to as “the Congress”). Convened once every five years, it is the largest UN conference covering the field of crime. The 14th Congress held in March 2021 was hosted by Japan, and took place at the Kyoto International Conference Center in Kyoto City.

Furthermore, Japan provides support to improve prosecution capabilities and other criminal justice functions, to improve the operation of prisons, and to enhance capacities related to measures against cybercrime in Southeast Asian countries, by providing financial contributions to UNODC and Interpol, as well as contributions through the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF).

Through the United Nations Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFEI)²⁰, training on offender treatment, crime prevention, and anti-crime measures are conducted in Japan, contributing to the capacity building of criminal justice officers and other relevant personnel from various countries.

Japan is a State Party to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), which establishes a global legal framework for promoting cooperation to prevent and combat transnational organized crime including terrorism more effectively. Japan advances international cooperation that includes providing international assistance in investigations in accordance with the UNTOC and reviewing the implementation of the Convention.

C Anti-corruption Measures

There is growing global interest in addressing corruption, which has been pointed out as a factor that threatens sustainable development and the rule of law. Against this backdrop, Japan, as a State Party to the UN Convention

against Corruption (UNCAC), which sets out provisions for international cooperation and measures to address corruption such as bribery and embezzlement of property by public officials, actively participates in discussions for the effective implementation of the UNCAC and the strengthening of international cooperation on preventing and combating corruption. In September, under the UNCAC review mechanism (mutual reviews conducted among the State Parties), an executive summary was published on the results of a country review conducted on Japan’s implementation of the UNCAC regarding the provisions for criminalization and law enforcement (Chapter III) and international cooperation (Chapter IV). Japan also participates actively in the activities of the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group and has contributed to formulating high-level principles in areas related to anti-corruption, including strengthening international cooperation on law enforcement and promoting integrity among authorities that are responsible for preventing corruption. In August 2023, Japan attended the ministerial meeting held for the second time since the establishment of the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group. After discussions on strengthening the international anti-corruption framework, the G20 Anti-Corruption Ministerial Meeting Outcome Document and Chair’s Summary were adopted. In addition, Japan conducts the International Training Course on the Criminal Justice Response to Corruption in Japan through the UNAFEI.

Japan is an active participant in the OECD Working Group on Bribery, which verifies the implementation

²⁰ A regional UN research institute established in 1962 based on an agreement between the Government of Japan and the UN. Located in Akishima City, Tokyo, it is operated by the Ministry of Justice, and continuously implements training courses in the field of criminal justice for participants invited from overseas.

of the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions by each state party to prevent the bribery of foreign public officials.

D Measures to Combat Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism

Regarding anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing (AML/CFT) measures, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an international framework that establishes the international standards that countries should implement and conducts peer reviews to assess levels of implementation. In recent years, the FATF has also been engaged in initiatives to prevent financing for the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and has issued the FATF statement that calls for the eradication of illegal financial activities by North Korea.

As a founding member, Japan has actively participated in these discussions. The Fourth Round Mutual Evaluation Report of Japan was adopted at the FATF Plenary held in June 2021, and was published at the end of August the same year. Japan is steadily making preparations and implementing measures to address the points for improvement raised in this Report.

In addition, Japan takes measures to counter the financing of terrorism as a State Party to the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, and also implements its own response measures to freeze the assets of terrorists and terrorist entities in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 1373,²¹ and designations by the UN Security Council Taliban Sanctions Committee and the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee. In light of the terror attacks against Israel by Hamas and others on October 7, 2023, Japan designated nine individuals and one entity related to Hamas as subjects for asset freezing and other measures on October 31, in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 1373. After that, it additionally designated three individuals related to Hamas on December 26. As of December 31, 2023, Japan has implemented asset freezing measures on 410 individuals and 120 entities in total.

E Measures to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants

To effectively combat increasingly sophisticated and obscure trafficking in persons, Japan has strengthened its domestic system in accordance with its “2022 Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons,” while proactively providing assistance to developing countries. For example, in 2023, Japan continued to conduct training programs through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to deepen mutual understanding on human trafficking countermeasures (especially prevention, victim protection and support to restore the financial independence of victims) of stakeholders in Asian countries, including Japan, and to promote more effective regional cooperation. Furthermore, Japan has been implementing a technical cooperation project with the Government of Thailand via JICA since January 2022, and in August 2023, held a workshop on human trafficking countermeasures to strengthen networks among those involved in such countermeasures in the Mekong region. Japan has been engaged in technical cooperation with the government of Cambodia through JICA, aimed at enhancing the capacity of the relevant organizations to support victims of human trafficking. With respect to cooperation with international organizations, in 2023, through funding to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Japan continued to provide assistance for the safe repatriation of foreign victims of trafficking in persons protected in Japan, and to carry out social reintegration assistance programs to prevent the recurrence of trafficking after they return to their countries. Japan also provided support to strengthen response capabilities, including training programs for law enforcement authorities, by funding projects organized by UNODC in Southeast Asia.

As a State Party to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, Japan has also further deepened its cooperation with other countries with a view to combating trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants (See the Column on page 232).

²¹ Adopted by the UN Security Council in September 2001 after the September 11 terrorist attacks in the U.S. in the same year. It calls for UN Member States to take comprehensive measures against those who undertake acts of terrorism and those who have involvement with such actors, such as by freezing their assets.

COLUMN

UNESCO's Educational and Humanitarian Support to Help Children at the Thai-Myanmar Border

KAI Toshiya, Consultant, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Myanmar is a country in Asia, like Japan is. While the majority of its people are said to be Buddhists, many Japanese people may not be familiar with the country. On the other hand, in its neighboring country of Thailand, another Southeast Asian country, there is a large number of Japanese people, and it is visited by millions of tourists worldwide.

Since the military coup d'état in Myanmar on February 1, 2021, the number of evacuees, including children, from Myanmar to Thailand is increasing rapidly near the border. This situation has become a humanitarian and social issue. Just in June 2022, the number of people from Myanmar who entered Tak Province in northern Thailand irregularly was estimated at 10,500 (according to a survey conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM)). Of these, more than 2,000 new arrivals to Thailand were children of schooling age who have been deprived of school education for years. A rise in the number of children who are unable to attend school poses a significant risk of human trafficking, child labor, and exploitation. Girls, in particular, are at greater risk of falling prey to sexual exploitation outside schools. The Migrant Educational Coordination Centre (MECC) under the Ministry of Education of Thailand is working hard to coordinate with 64 Migrant Learning Centres (MLCs) to manage the education of more than 10,000 children in Tak Province. However, its financial resources are extremely limited.

Since its establishment, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been promoting international cooperation in the fields of education, sciences, culture, and communication, as well as in projects to support developing countries. In these areas of work, it also addresses the personnel and institutional aspects of crisis preparedness, rescue and relief, recovery, and reconstruction. Particularly in the field of education, it provides support to enable access to quality education with the aim of building a foundation for sustainable recovery and long-term development.

In light of the deteriorating situation at the Thai-Myanmar border, UNESCO, with support from the Government of Japan, has launched an emergency educational and humanitarian support project in Tak Province to provide displaced children with a safe space and access to learning. From the perspective of the UN's humanitarian-development-peace cooperation (HDP nexus), this project is strengthening the links between humanitarian action, development, and peace by promoting social cohesion (promoting equality, justice, tolerance, respect, and diversity through education), building social resilience, promoting dialogue, and strengthening ownership of the region. Specifically, various forms of support are provided, including ensuring continued learning for approximately 3,000 migrant children and providing food assistance and hygiene management, providing ICT equipment and Internet services to enable access to online learning programs, developing quality video courses for main subjects that are in line with the basic educational curriculum prescribed by the Ministry of Education of Myanmar, and offering Thai language classes so that migrant children and youths can transfer from MLCs to schools in Thailand. Support is also provided to about 100 teachers, including the provision of opportunities to learn about sociability and emotions. More than double the number of students is enrolled in the target MLCs, so the ability to access online learning programs from remote locations means that more children who require assistance can benefit from the renovation of MLCs and such online learning programs. Through this project, migrants and socially vulnerable children are given safe, appropriate, and inclusive opportunities to continue learning, alongside improving their physical and mental health, and reducing learning loss. In this way, it is expected that the project will promote peace at the Thai-Myanmar border. Even after the conclusion of the project, we also plan to build partnerships with other UN agencies, government organizations, foundations, Japanese corporations, NGOs, and other entities, so that continued support can be provided to the children.



School meal at an MLC (August 15, Thailand; Photo: MECC TAK PASEO 2)



Learning in progress at an MLC (December, Thailand; Photo: MECC TAK PASEO 2)

F Measures to Combat Illicit Drug Trafficking

In cooperation with UNODC, Japan is contributing to investigations and development of analytical information for interdiction of the production, manufacturing, and trafficking of precursor chemicals and newly emerged synthetic drugs, and the maintenance and enhancement of cooperative networks. Alongside strengthening practical capabilities for cross-border drug control, providing support for the production of alternative crops to reduce illicit cultivation of plant materials for drug, and preparing information for regulation of the controlled substances, Japan is also working to take measures against the global proliferation of illicit drugs while giving consideration to region-specific development challenges in the area of drug control.

4 Disarmament and Non-proliferation and the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy

(1) Nuclear Disarmament

As the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, Japan has the responsibility to lead the international efforts to realize a world without nuclear weapons.

However, the path toward a world without nuclear weapons has become even more severe due to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, North Korea's nuclear and missile development, and China's nuclear enhancement without transparency. Furthermore, as seen in the situation surrounding the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), there exists an apparent divergence of views on how best to advance nuclear disarmament, a divergence that exists not only between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States but also among non-nuclear-weapon States that are exposed to the threat of nuclear weapons and those that are not. Considering these circumstances, it is necessary to persistently advance realistic and practical efforts, while

bridge-building between states with divergent views, in order to promote nuclear disarmament.

With the aim of realizing a world without nuclear weapons, Japan, under the leadership of Prime Minister Kishida, who hails from Hiroshima, is steadily advancing efforts toward nuclear disarmament. In particular, at the G7 Hiroshima Summit held in May in the atomic-bombed city of Hiroshima, the leaders of participating countries had the opportunity to learn firsthand the reality of atomic bombing. Furthermore, the G7 leaders engaged in candid discussions and affirmed their commitment to a world without nuclear weapons. They also issued the "G7 Leaders' Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament," the first stand-alone G7 leaders' document focusing on nuclear disarmament, emphasizing the importance of maintaining and strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regime, which both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States participate in, and increased the momentum of the international community toward realizing a world without nuclear weapons. It is historically significant that the G7 leaders, who listened to the voices of atomic-bombing survivors, learned firsthand the reality of the atomic bombing, and learned directly of the feelings of people who wish for peace, have issued the "G7 Leaders' Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament." Japan will continue realistic and practical efforts by building on this Vision as a solid platform, and implementing each of the initiatives under the "Hiroshima Action Plan"²² announced by Prime Minister Kishida at the NPT Review Conference in 2022.

Furthermore, Japan has continued to pursue bridge-building between states with divergent views. It has done this, for example, through holding meetings of the International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons (IGEP), submitting the Resolution on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons to the UN General Assembly, and cooperation and collaboration with like-minded countries, including within the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI), as well as individual consultations. Moreover, Japan

²² Proposed by Prime Minister Kishida at the NPT Review Conference in August 2022. As the first step of a realistic roadmap to take us from the "reality" we face in the harsh security environment to the "ideal" of a world without nuclear weapons, it is rooted in the following five actions alongside efforts to reduce nuclear risks: (1) shared recognition on the importance of continuing the record of non-use of nuclear weapons; (2) enhancing transparency; (3) maintaining the decreasing trend of the global nuclear stockpile; (4) securing nuclear non-proliferation and promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy; and, (5) encouraging visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki by international leaders and others.

intends to continue maintaining and strengthening the NPT regime through cumulative efforts including through building up realistic and practical efforts, such as encouraging states to promote the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and to commence negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), promoting education on disarmament and non-proliferation, and further, discussions and exercises with nuclear-weapon States toward the realization of effective nuclear disarmament verification.

The TPNW is an important treaty that could be regarded as a final passage to a world without nuclear weapons. However, not a single nuclear-weapon State has joined the TPNW, even though the engagement of nuclear-weapon States is indispensable to change the reality. Therefore, instead of addressing the situation through signing and ratifying the TPNW, Japan, as the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, must make efforts to involve nuclear-weapon States. To that end, Japan first intends to advance realistic and practical measures toward the realization of a world without nuclear weapons, based on the foundation of trust built with its only ally, the U.S.

A Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

Japan places great importance on maintaining and strengthening the NPT regime, which is the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. NPT Review Conferences have been held once every five years with the aim of achieving the goals of the NPT and ensuring compliance with its provisions, and discussions that reflect the international situation of the time have been held since the NPT entered into force in 1970.

The first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 11th NPT Review Conference in 2026 was convened from July 31 to August 11 at the UN Office in Vienna. State Minister for Foreign Affairs TAKEI Shunsuke represented Japan at this meeting, during which he delivered a statement at the general debate as the first speaker. He stated that, maintaining and strengthening the NPT regime is in the interest of the

international community as a whole, especially because the path toward a world without nuclear weapons has become ever more challenging, and that Japan will continue to advance realistic and practical efforts under the “Hiroshima Action Plan.” He also referred to the contents of the Comprehensive Report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) published in July regarding the discharge of ALPS treated water²³ into the sea, and stated that Japan has provided sincere explanations based on scientific evidence to the international community in a highly transparent manner, and would continue to do so in the future.

While it was meaningful that States Parties demonstrated a common recognition of the importance of maintaining and strengthening the NPT regime toward the next NPT Review Conference in 2026, and held candid exchanges in person, it was regrettable that the Chair was ultimately unable to submit the Chair’s Summary as a working paper due to opposing views from some countries. These divisions within the international community must be overcome in the future. Nevertheless, this meeting served to reaffirm the firm and widely shared recognition that maintaining and strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, with the NPT as the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, is in the interest of the entire international community.

B International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons (IGEP)

In January 2022, Prime Minister Kishida announced in his Policy Speech to the Diet that the IGEP will serve as an opportunity for participants from nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States, as well as those from countries participating and not participating in the TPNW, to exchange ideas and thoughts beyond their respective national positions, with the involvement of former and incumbent political leaders of the world, and engage in candid discussions concerning a concrete path toward the realization of a world without nuclear weapons.

Following the first meeting held in December 2022, the second meeting was held in Tokyo on April 4 and

²³ ALPS treated water is water which is processed by devices such as ALPS (Advanced Liquid Processing System) to ensure that the radioactive materials other than tritium surely meet the regulatory standards for safety. ALPS treated water is then sufficiently diluted so that the concentrations of the radioactive materials including tritium is far below the regulatory standards for safety, and then finally discharged into the sea.



Third Meeting of the IGEP (December 8 to 9, Nagasaki City, Nagasaki Prefecture; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

5. In addition to three Japanese members, including Chair SHIRAISHI Takashi (Chancellor of the Prefectural University of Kumamoto), six non-Japanese members from both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States also attended the meeting, making nine members in total participating in person. Five other non-Japanese members also attended the meeting online. The IGEP members concurred on compiling a concrete message based on the discussions at this meeting as to provide input to the first session of the Preparatory Committee of the 11th NPT Review Conference in 2026. Based on the recognition that the international community is facing grave and unprecedented nuclear challenges, and that it is imperative to transform the current crisis into an opportunity to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime in particular by upholding and strengthening the NPT regime, the message delivered set out the following priority measures that should be addressed in the next NPT review cycle starting from the first session of the Preparatory Committee: (1) “reinforcing and expanding norms,” such as prohibition of using or threatening to use nuclear weapons; (2) “taking concrete measures,” such as engaging in dialogue on establishing new arms control arrangements; and, (3) “revitalizing and strengthening the NPT review process.”

The third meeting was held in Nagasaki on December 8 and 9, and three Japanese members, including Chair Shiraishi, as well as 10 non-Japanese members from nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States attended the meeting, making a total of 13 members who attended the meeting in person. One non-Japanese member participated in the meeting virtually. In addition, the Rt Hon. the Lord Browne of Ladyton, Member of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom

(former Secretary of State for Defence) attended in person as a political leader, and Dr. TOMONAGA Masao, Honorary Director of the Japanese Red Cross Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Hospital participated in person in the capacity of an expert from the host city.

Prime Minister Kishida attended the closing session. In his statement, he expressed that the significance of the IGEP lies in renewing the shared determination to ensure that “Nagasaki is the last place to suffer an atomic bombing” through candid discussions, and that he will continue to demonstrate strong leadership toward a world without nuclear weapons, while also taking into account the sage views of the IGEP.

At this meeting, the IGEP members engaged in an in-depth review of the challenges in advancing nuclear disarmament from today’s perspective of changes in the international security environment and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI). They also began consideration of the final product of the IGEP for the 2026 NPT Review Conference. With the firm resolve to ensure that “Nagasaki is the last place to suffer an atomic bombing,” they concurred that further strengthening diplomatic efforts and political leadership are vital to avoid greater instability to the international security environment surrounding nuclear disarmament.

C Japan Chair for a world without nuclear weapons

In his address at the General Debate of the UN General Assembly on September 19, Prime Minister Kishida announced the establishment of “Japan Chair for a world without nuclear weapons” at overseas research institutes and think tanks with a 3 billion Japanese yen contribution, based on the recognition that multi-layered efforts, not just the government efforts, are important in order to steadily advance the trend of “mainstreaming” nuclear disarmament.

The “Japan Chair” initiative supports the establishment of specialized posts for nuclear disarmament (“Japan Chair for a world without nuclear weapons”) at leading overseas research institutes and think tanks, with a view to stimulating discussions on “realistic and practical nuclear disarmament” for which Japan advocates, as well as contributing to overcoming divisions in the international community. Activities are expected to commence in 2024.

D The Non-proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI)

The NPDI, a group of 12 non-nuclear-weapon States from various regions established under the leadership of Japan and Australia in 2010 has served as a bridge between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. It leads efforts in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation through its realistic and practical proposals. In August 2022, Prime Minister Kishida attended the 11th NPDI High-level Meeting held in New York, as the first Prime Minister of Japan to attend this NPDI High-level Meeting. A Joint High-level Statement was released after the meeting, which expressed NPDI's resolve to remain committed to fostering the sustained, high-level political leadership and diplomatic dialogue needed to strengthen the implementation of the NPT.

The NPDI has actively contributed to the NPT review process through realistic and practical proposals, including the submission of 19 working papers to the Ninth NPT Review process and 18 to the Tenth NPT Review process. At the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 11th NPT Review Conference in 2026 held from July to August 2023, NPDI released a joint statement and submitted joint working papers on transparency (reporting) and accountability, as well as on strengthening review process of the NPT. In addition, at the working group on further strengthening the review process of the NPT, convened shortly before the Preparatory Committee, concrete discussions were held on the need to enhance transparency as well as accountability by presenting in national reports, for which Japan has long advocated through the NPDI.

E Initiatives Through the United Nations (Resolution on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons)

Since 1994, Japan has submitted draft resolutions on the elimination of nuclear weapons to the UN General Assembly. They incorporate issues of the time related to nuclear disarmament with a view to presenting a realistic and concrete nuclear disarmament approach proposed by Japan to the international community. Recognizing the need to present a way forward for realistic and practical measures to realize a world without nuclear weapons, the 2023 draft resolution submitted by Japan took into

consideration discussions at the G7 Hiroshima Summit and the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 11th NPT Review Conference in 2026, and focused on calling on the international community to implement concrete measures particularly to advance efforts regarding a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) and to enhance transparency, in order to further realize and promote the “Hiroshima Action Plan” proposed by Prime Minister Kishida at the 10th NPT Review Conference in August 2022. The resolution was adopted with the broad support of 145 countries at the First Committee of the UN General Assembly in October and of 148 countries at the Plenary Meeting of the UN General Assembly in December. The states supporting the resolution have divergent views, including nuclear-weapon States such as the U.S. and UK, as well as U.S. allies such as NATO member countries, Australia, the ROK, and the states advocating the TPNW. While other resolutions that comprehensively addressed nuclear disarmament were submitted to the General Assembly in addition to Japan's draft resolution on the elimination of nuclear weapons, Japan has enjoyed support among a larger number of states. Every year, Japan's resolutions continue to enjoy the broad support of states with divergent views in the international community.

F Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)

Japan attaches great importance to promoting the entry into force of the CTBT as a realistic measure of nuclear disarmament where both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States can participate.

The 13th Conference on Facilitating the Entry-into-Force of the CTBT was held in September during the



Foreign Minister Kamikawa delivering a statement at the 13th Conference on Facilitating the Entry-into-Force of the CTBT (September 22, New York, U.S.)

UN General Assembly High-Level Week. Foreign Minister Kamikawa attended the conference and delivered a statement. She explained that Japan attaches great importance to the early entry into force of the CTBT as a realistic and practical nuclear disarmament measure, and emphasizing that the relevance of the CTBT has never been greater, called for cooperation of the international community to advance the Treaty.

With regard to developments among states whose ratification is necessary for the entry into force of the CTBT, President Vladimir Putin of Russia, which ratified the CTBT in 2000, signed a bill to revoke its ratification in November 2023, and the bill has entered into force. Taking into consideration that Russia is a state whose ratification is necessary for the entry into force of the CTBT, as well as the largest nuclear-weapon State among the States Signatories and States Parties of the CTBT, Russia's decision to revoke its ratification of the CTBT goes against the international community's longstanding efforts. In light of that, Japan has issued a Statement by Foreign Minister and other statements condemning Russia's decision.

G Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty²⁴ (FMCT)

A Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) would have great significance for both disarmament and non-proliferation, as it would prevent the emergence of new states possessing nuclear-weapons by banning the production of fissile materials such as highly-enriched

uranium and plutonium for nuclear weapons. At the same time, it would limit the production of nuclear weapons by nuclear-weapon States. However, no consensus has been reached on commencing negotiations for a Treaty despite decades of discussions in the Conference on Disarmament (CD). Consequently, it was decided at the 71st UN General Assembly in 2016 to establish the FMCT High-Level Experts Preparatory Group, and Japan actively participated in the Group's discussions.

Furthermore, during the UN General Assembly High-Level Week in September 2023, Prime Minister Kishida co-hosted the Commemorative High-Level Event on an FMCT together with the Philippines and Australia. The purpose of this event was to refocus political attention toward an FMCT on the occasion of this year that marks the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly resolution calling for an FMCT. In his keynote speech, Prime Minister Kishida pointed out that, for the first time since the peak of the Cold War, the world is on the cusp of a reversal of the decreasing trend of the global number of nuclear arsenals, making it even more necessary to start early negotiations on an FMCT. Attendees from the respective countries engaged in active exchange of views, and this event provided an opportunity for refocusing political interest on an FMCT.



Prime Minister Kishida delivering an address at the Commemorative High-Level Event on an FMCT (September 19, New York, U.S.; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

²⁴ A treaty concept that aims to prevent the increase in the number of nuclear weapons by prohibiting the production of fissile materials (such as enriched uranium and plutonium) that are used as materials to produce nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

H Disarmament and Non-proliferation Education

As the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, Japan places great importance on disarmament and non-proliferation education. Specifically, Japan has been actively engaged in efforts to convey the reality of atomic bombings to people around the world, through activities such as translating the testimonies of atomic bomb survivors into other languages, invitations for young diplomats from various countries to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki through the UN Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament,²⁵ providing assistance for holding atomic bomb exhibitions overseas,²⁶ and designating atomic bomb survivors who have given testimonies of their atomic bomb experiences as “Special Communicators for a World without Nuclear Weapons.”

At the General Debate of the NPT Review Conference held in August 2022, Prime Minister Kishida announced that Japan would contribute 10 million U.S. dollars to the UN for the establishment of the “Youth Leader Fund for a World Without Nuclear Weapons.” The goal of this program is to create a global network of future generations with the shared goal toward the elimination of nuclear weapons by bringing future leaders such as young policymakers and researchers from both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States to Japan to learn firsthand the reality of atomic bombings. The training under this Fund commenced in December 2023.

Additionally, as the atomic bomb survivors are aging, it is becoming increasingly important to pass on the realities of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings across generations and borders. To this end, from 2013 to 2023, Japan conferred the designation of “Youth Communicators for a World without Nuclear Weapons” on more than 600 youths in Japan and overseas.

I Initiatives Toward Future Arms Control

In the area of nuclear disarmament, in addition to initiatives through multilateral frameworks such as the NPT, the U.S. and Russia have also concluded and maintained a bilateral arms control treaty. On

February 3, 2021, the two countries agreed on an extension to the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START Treaty). The New START Treaty demonstrates important progress in nuclear disarmament between the U.S. and Russia, and Japan welcomed this extension. However, in August 2022, Russia announced the exemption of all its facilities from inspection activities temporarily. It also notified the U.S. about the postponement of the Bilateral Consultative Commission (BCC) scheduled for November the same year. In January 2023, the U.S. Department of State submitted a report to Congress stating that Russia cannot be certified as being in compliance with the New START Treaty. In February, President Putin announced in his Address to the Federal Assembly the suspension of the implementation of the New START Treaty. In light of these developments, the “G7 Leaders’ Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament”, for example, also expressed deep regret over Russia’s decision to undermine the New START Treaty, and called on Russia to enable a return to full implementation of the Treaty.

In view of the recent situations surrounding nuclear weapons, it is important to establish a new arms control mechanism that encompasses a wider range of countries beyond the U.S. and Russia, while also including a broader range of weapon systems. From this perspective, Japan has been explaining this issue to the relevant countries at various levels.

For example, at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) convened in July, Foreign Minister Hayashi stated that Japan expected China to play an active role in enhancing transparency of nuclear forces in the region as a nuclear-weapon State and as an important player in the international community, and expressed strong hope for dialogues leading to the development of broader framework of arms control, where a wide variety of countries are involved to deal with a wider range of weapon systems.

Furthermore, the aforementioned Resolution on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons also reaffirms the

²⁵ Implemented since 1983 by the UN to nurture nuclear disarmament experts. Program participants are invited to Hiroshima and Nagasaki to promote understanding of the reality of atomic bombings through such means as museum tours and talks by atomic-bomb survivors about their experiences in the atomic bombings.

²⁶ Opened as a permanent exhibition about the atomic bomb in New York, U.S.; Geneva, Switzerland; and Vienna, Austria, in cooperation with Hiroshima City and Nagasaki City.

special responsibility of nuclear-weapon States to initiate arms control dialogues on effective measures to prevent nuclear arms racing.

(2) Non-proliferation and Nuclear Security

A Japan's Efforts Toward Non-proliferation

To ensure Japan's security and to maintain peace and security of the international community, Japan has been making efforts concerning non-proliferation policy. The goal of such a policy is to prevent the proliferation of weapons that could threaten Japan and the international community (weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear weapons and biological/chemical weapons, as well as missiles with the ability to deliver those weapons and conventional weapons) and of related materials and technologies used to develop such weapons.

Amid the upheaval of the international order, there are growing concerns over non-proliferation in countries such as North Korea, Iran, and Syria. Non-proliferation risks are also growing on the back of many factors. For one, economic growth has enabled expanded capacity to produce and supply weapons as well as materials that could be diverted to the development of such weapons. In addition, distribution channels have become more complex alongside advancing globalization, and procurement methods for substances of concern and other materials have become increasingly sophisticated. The emergence of new technologies has also heightened the risk of the diversion of private sector technologies to military uses.

Under these circumstances, Japan has been implementing its non-proliferation policies through international non-proliferation regimes and rules,

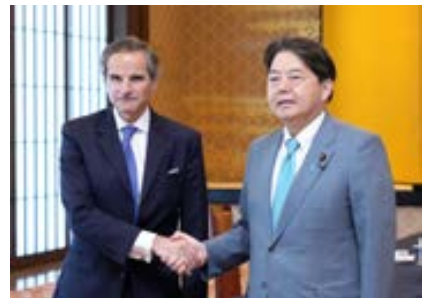
■ Japan and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The IAEA is an organization affiliated with the UN, which was established in 1957 with the aim of promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy and at the same time, ensuring that nuclear energy is not used for any military purpose. Article III of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which entered into force in 1970, sets out the obligation of non-nuclear-weapon States to accept IAEA safeguards with a view to preventing diversion of nuclear technology from peaceful uses to military uses.

The activities of the IAEA, which is known as the nuclear watchdog, range widely from implementing safeguards to ensure nuclear non-proliferation and measures to counter nuclear terrorism, to technical support related to nuclear power generation, and research and support for nuclear technologies in non-electric applications such as health, medicine, food and agriculture, water resource management, the environment, and industrial uses. It also plays a key role in nuclear non-proliferation in countries such as North Korea and Iran.

Since joining the IAEA as an original member state, Japan has contributed to discussions in the General Conference and Board of Governors meetings as a designated member state. It has also deepened cooperation with the IAEA traditionally in the nuclear non-proliferation field and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and actively supported IAEA activities in the human resources and financial aspects. Recently, in addition to cooperation on the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea by TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, and on nuclear safety in Ukraine, Japan is also advancing cooperation on various initiatives that the IAEA is promoting against the backdrop of growing global interest and demand for the use of nuclear energy in areas such as medicine, food, and the environment. Some examples are the "Rays of Hope" (an initiative related to radioactive cancer treatment and diagnosis) advocated by the IAEA and "Atoms4Food" (an initiative related to food issues), aimed at the attainment of SDGs in developing countries. Japan contributes funding to such initiatives.

Through opportunities such as visits by Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi to Japan as a guest of MOFA on three occasions, Japan is working to strengthen cooperation with the IAEA in these areas.



Foreign Minister Hayashi meeting with IAEA Director General Grossi on his visit to Japan as a guest of MOFA (July 4, Tokyo)

taking non-proliferation measures domestically, and promoting close coordination with and capacity building support for other nations.

Measures for preventing proliferation include IAEA safeguards, export control, and counter-proliferation initiatives.

Safeguards refer to verification activities conducted in accordance with safeguards agreements between states and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and aim to ensure that nuclear energy will not be diverted from peaceful uses to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Safeguards are a primary means of achieving nuclear non-proliferation, which is one of three pillars of the NPT, and strengthening safeguards is vital toward promoting nuclear disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear power. As a designated member of the IAEA Board of Governors,²⁷ Japan is advancing various efforts including supporting the IAEA's activities, supporting enhanced understanding and implementation capabilities toward safeguards, and promoting the universalization of the Additional Protocol (AP).²⁸ Japan also contributes to capacity development in the area of safeguards in each country, such as through its contributions to the meetings of the Asia Pacific Safeguards Network (APSN) and training projects conducted in Japan for Asian countries.

Export control is a measure in the so-called supply-side regulation toward countries of proliferation concern, terrorist organizations, and other entities attempting to acquire or distribute weapons or related materials or technologies. There are four export control frameworks (international export control regimes) in the international community. Japan has participated in all of them since their inception, engaging in international coordination

and practicing strict export control. Each of the four regimes, namely the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) for nuclear weapons, the Australia Group (AG) for chemical and biological weapons, the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) for missiles,²⁹ and the Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) for conventional weapons, establishes a list of dual-use items and technologies which contribute to the development of weapons that should be controlled. To ensure the non-proliferation of materials and technologies of concern, participating countries to the regimes implement export control measures on the listed items and technologies in accordance with their domestic laws. The international export control regimes also exchange information concerning trends in countries of proliferation concern and are engaged in outreach activities to non-participating countries to the regimes in order to strengthen their export control. The Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organizations in Vienna serves as the Point of Contact of the NSG, and Japan actively engages in such international rule-making and application of rules.

Furthermore, Japan is promoting counter-proliferation initiatives with a view to complementing such safeguards and the activities of the international export control regimes, and comprehensively addressing the proliferation and threat of weapons of mass destruction. Specifically, Japan participates actively in the activities of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI),³⁰ and works to enhance coordination among countries and relevant institutions, such as by hosting the PSI interdiction exercise on four occasions. In June 2023, Japan participated in the exercise hosted by the ROK. In addition, with regard to the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1540,³¹ which was adopted

²⁷ 13 countries are designated by the IAEA Board of Governors. The designated member states include Japan and other countries with advanced nuclear energy capabilities.

²⁸ In addition to a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) that is applied on all nuclear materials pertaining to the peaceful nuclear activities in that country, and that non-nuclear-weapon NPT States Parties are required to conclude with the IAEA pursuant to Article III Paragraph 1 of the NPT, an Additional Protocol is concluded between the IAEA and the respective State Parties. The conclusion of the Additional Protocol expands the scope of nuclear activity information that should be declared to the IAEA, and gives the IAEA strengthened measures to verify the absence of undeclared nuclear materials and activities. As of December 2023, 142 countries have concluded the Additional Protocol.

²⁹ Apart from export control regimes, the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCOCC), which includes the principle of exercising restraint in their development and deployment, addresses the issue of ballistic missiles. As of December 2023, 144 countries subscribe to the HCOCC.

³⁰ An initiative launched in 2003 for the purpose of implementing and considering possible measures consistent with relevant international laws and national legal authorities in order to interdict the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missiles, along with related materials. 106 countries participate in and support the PSI as of December 2023. In 2013, the six countries of Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the ROK, Singapore, and the U.S. agreed to conduct a yearly rotation exercise in the Asia Pacific region. Through the cooperation of agencies including MOFA, the National Police Agency, the Ministry of Finance, the Japan Coast Guard and the Ministry of Defense, Japan has hosted PSI maritime interdiction exercises in 2004, 2007, and 2018, PSI air interdiction exercises in 2012, and an Operational Experts Group (OEG) meeting in 2010. Japan has also actively participated in training and related meetings hosted by other countries.

³¹ Adopted in April 2004, UN Security Council resolution 1540 obliges all countries to: (1) refrain from providing support to terrorists and other non-state actors attempting to develop weapons of mass destruction; (2) adopt and enforce laws prohibiting the development of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists and other non-state actors; and (3) implement domestic controls (protective measures, border control, export controls, etc.) to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The resolution also establishes, under the UN Security Council, the 1540 Committee, which comprises Security Council members and has a mandate to review and report to the Security Council the level of resolution 1540 implementation by member states.

in 2004 with the aim of preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery (missiles) to non-state actors, Japan contributes to maintaining and strengthening international non-proliferation regimes through means such as making financial contributions to support the implementation of the resolution by Asian nations. In 2023, Japan, as the G7 Presidency, hosted the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction Working Group (GPWG)³² in Tokyo and Nagasaki.

Japan also holds the Asian Senior-level Talks on Non-Proliferation (ASTOP)³³ and the Asian Export Control Seminar³⁴ every year in order to promote a better understanding of the non-proliferation regimes and strengthen regional efforts, mainly in Asian countries.

B Regional Non-proliferation Issues

In 2023, North Korea launched ballistic missiles 18 times, making at least 25 launches. This series of actions by North Korea is a flagrant violation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and constitutes a grave and imminent threat to Japan's national security. At the same time, it also poses a clear and serious challenge to the international community, and is absolutely unacceptable. The IAEA Director General's report in August pointed out that North Korea's nuclear activities continue to be a cause for serious concern, and that the continuation of North Korea's nuclear programme is a clear violation of UN Security Council resolutions. Moreover, at the IAEA General Conference convened in September, a resolution calling strongly on North Korea to take concrete steps toward achieving

complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of all of its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear plans, as well as the prompt suspension of all related activities, was adopted by consensus. This demonstrated the united position of the IAEA member states toward the denuclearization of North Korea. Japan, too, took opportunities such as the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 11th NPT Review Conference in August, the IAEA General Conference in September, and the IAEA Board of Governors' Meeting in November, to proactively convey to the international community the importance of addressing North Korea's nuclear issue.

It is crucial that the international community makes concerted efforts to fully implement the UN Security Council resolutions for dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges, in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, by North Korea. To that end, Japan will continue to coordinate closely with related countries, including the U.S. and the ROK, as well as international organizations such as the UN and the IAEA. At the same time, from the viewpoint of the full implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions, Japan will work on capacity building for export control, particularly in Asia. Japan will also continue to contribute actively to discussions on North Korea's nuclear and missile activities in international export control regimes such as the NSG and the MTCR.

Since the withdrawal of the previous U.S. administration under President Trump from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)³⁵ in 2018 and the reimposition of independent sanctions on Iran, Iran has continued actions to reduce its commitments

³² The establishment of the GPWG was agreed upon at the G8 Kananaskis Summit (Canada) in 2002. In the initial stages, nuclear non-proliferation projects were implemented, such as the dismantlement of decommissioned nuclear submarines and destruction of chemical weapons in target countries such as Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, where this was a pressing problem in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. Today, the Working Group is convened about twice a year under the G7 host country, and it works to promote cooperation to reduce specific proliferation threats in places such as Ukraine and the Global South, in areas such as nuclear and radiological security, and biological and chemical security. Furthermore, it also works to match project contributors with beneficiary organizations.

³³ A multilateral Director-General-level meeting launched in 2003 and hosted by Japan to discuss various issues related to the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime in Asia among the 10 ASEAN member states, China, India, the ROK, as well as the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, Canada, France, and the EU, which have common interests in Asian regional security. Most recently, the 18th meeting was held in December 2023, and discussions were held on topics such as proliferation challenges in Asia and the strengthening of export control.

³⁴ A seminar hosted by Japan to exchange views and information toward strengthening export controls in Asia, with the participation of export control officials from Asian countries and regions. It has been organized annually in Tokyo since 1993.

³⁵ Sets forth detailed procedures for imposing constraints on Iran's nuclear activities while ensuring that they serve peaceful purposes, and for lifting the imposed sanctions.

<Main measures undertaken by Iran>

- Constraints on enriched uranium-related activities

- Limit on the number of centrifuges in operation to 5,060 units

- Upper limit on enriched uranium at 3.67%, and limit on the amount of stored enriched uranium at 300 kg, etc.

- Constraints on the Arak heavy-water nuclear reactor, and reprocessing

- Redesign / remodeling of the Arak heavy-water nuclear reactor so that it is not able to produce weapon-grade plutonium and to transfer spent fuel out of the country

- No reprocessing, including for research purposes, no construction of reprocessing facilities, etc.

under the JCPOA. In February 2021, Iran suspended the implementation of transparency measures under the JCPOA including the Additional Protocol (AP), and commenced production of 60% enriched uranium in April the same year.

Japan has consistently supported the JCPOA, which contributes to strengthening the international non-proliferation regime. From this perspective, it has continued to support efforts by relevant countries toward the return of both the U.S. and Iran to the JCPOA. Japan, being deeply concerned about Iran's continued reduction of its commitments under the JCPOA, has repeatedly urged Iran to refrain from further measures that may undermine the JCPOA and to return fully to its commitments under the JCPOA.

In March 2023, IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi revisited Iran to discuss these issues related to the implementation of the JCPOA and the series of safeguards issues (in which nuclear materials that had not been declared to the IAEA were found in Iran). The two sides issued a joint statement toward future cooperation on the safeguards issues and other matters. At the Board of Governor's meeting in September, a joint statement was issued by like-minded countries urging Iran to respond to the IAEA Director General's requests immediately. Later, the IAEA Director General's report published in November reported that cooperation based on the joint statement had appeared to be "frozen." Japan will continue to call strongly on Iran to cooperate completely and unconditionally with the IAEA. Japan will also continue to contribute to discussions related to Iran's nuclear and missile activities in the international export control regimes such as the NSG and the MTCR.

As for Syria, the IAEA Board of Governors in 2011 found that activities such as Syria's undeclared construction of a nuclear reactor would constitute non-compliance with its safeguards agreement with the IAEA. To address this outstanding issue, Japan has called upon Syria to cooperate fully with the IAEA. It is important for Syria to sign, ratify and implement the AP.

Nuclear Security

International cooperation is advancing in nuclear security to prevent acts of terrorism such as those involving

the use of nuclear and other radioactive materials. These include the entering into force of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT) in 2007 and of the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material in 2015, respectively. In addition, the Nuclear Security Summit was held four times between 2010 and 2016. Japan has actively participated in and contributed to these efforts. For example, at the International Conference on Nuclear Security held by the IAEA in 2020, State Minister for Foreign Affairs WAKAMIYA Kenji participated in the ministerial conference as a representative of the Government of Japan and delivered a speech to share the view of Japan with other participants.

In Vienna in March 2022, the first Conference of the Parties since the amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material was held, and the validity and implementation status of the amended Convention were discussed. Japan expressed its intention to continue to support the IAEA in the areas of human resources development and technological development going forward, as well as to contribute to strengthening international nuclear security.

On March 2 and 3, 2022, upon Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the IAEA Board of Governors convened a meeting in Vienna to discuss the safety, security and safeguards implications of the situation in Ukraine. At the meeting, participating countries condemned and expressed their concerns regarding Russia's attacks on the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant and other nuclear facilities in Ukraine from the perspective of nuclear safety, security and safeguards. The resolution adopted by a majority at the meeting deplores Russia's actions in Ukraine, which are posing serious and direct threats to the safety and security of nuclear facilities and civilian personnel. It also calls upon Russia to immediately cease all actions in order for Ukraine to preserve or promptly regain full control over nuclear facilities. Resolutions were also adopted by a majority at the Board of Governors' meeting in September and November of the same year. These resolutions express grave concern that Russia has not heeded the call of the Board to immediately cease all actions against and at nuclear facilities in Ukraine, and call on Russia to enable the Ukrainian authorities

to regain full control over the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant to ensure its safe and secure operation, as well as to enable the IAEA to fully and safely conduct its safeguards verification activities. Furthermore, they also incorporate support for the efforts by the IAEA Director General and others to address the implications for the nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine, through means such as the IAEA Support and Assistance Mission to Zaporizhzhia (ISAMZ) and the continuous presence of the IAEA staff at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. The resolution was also adopted by a majority at the IAEA General Conference in September 2023, reaffirming concern over the situation facing the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant and support for the relevant efforts by the IAEA. Japan also strongly condemns Russia's aggression, including its seizure of nuclear facilities, and will continue to support the IAEA's efforts for ensuring the safety of nuclear facilities in Ukraine.

(3) Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy

A Multilateral Efforts

Along with nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy is one of the three pillars of the NPT. According to the treaty, it is the “inalienable right” for any country that meets its obligations to non-proliferation to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Reflecting the increase in international energy demand, many countries use or are planning to use nuclear power.³⁶

On the other hand, these nuclear materials, equipment, and technologies used for nuclear power generation can be diverted to uses for military purposes, and a nuclear accident in one country may have significant impacts on neighboring countries. For these reasons, with regard to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, it is vital to ensure the “3S”;³⁷ that is, (1) Safeguards, (2) Nuclear Safety (e.g., measures to ensure safety to prevent nuclear accidents), and (3) Nuclear Security. As the country that experienced the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO)'s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station accident, it is Japan's

responsibility to share its experiences and lessons learned from the accident with other countries and to contribute to strengthening global nuclear safety. In 2013, the IAEA Response and Assistance Network (RANET) Capacity Building Centre (CBC) was designated in Fukushima Prefecture. At this Center, the IAEA and Japan cooperate to conduct training for Japanese and foreign officials to strengthen their capacity in the field of emergency preparedness and response.

Nuclear energy is applied not only to the field of power generation, but also to the field of non-power generation, including health, food and agriculture, the environment, and industrial uses. Promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in such non-power applications and contributing to development issues are becoming increasingly important as developing countries make up the majority of NPT States Parties. Therefore, the IAEA also contributes to technical cooperation for developing countries and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In this context, Japan has been actively supporting the IAEA's activities in the technical and financial aspects, for example, through its technical cooperation based on the Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development, and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology (RCA) and with its contribution to the Peaceful Uses Initiative (PUI). Examples of support projects facilitated by Japan's contributions to the PUI include projects to address the problem of marine pollution caused by plastic waste, radiation treatment for cancer, and projects to address the food issue.

B Bilateral Nuclear Cooperation Agreement

Bilateral nuclear cooperation agreements are concluded to establish a legal framework required for securing a legal assurance from the recipient country on nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear-related material and equipment that are transferred between the two countries, so as to realize cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy between the two countries. Under such bilateral agreements, cooperation in areas such as the strengthening of nuclear safety

³⁶ According to the IAEA, 412 nuclear reactors are in operation worldwide and 59 reactors are under construction (IAEA website; as of January 2024).

³⁷ “3S” is used to refer to the IAEA's efforts toward nuclear safety, nuclear security, and nuclear safeguards, which are typical measures for non-proliferation.

can be promoted. Japan makes its decision on whether or not to conclude a nuclear cooperation agreement framework with another country taking into account a wide range of factors such as non-proliferation efforts and nuclear energy policy of that country, its trust in and expectations for Japan, and the bilateral relationship between the two countries among others. As of December 2023, Japan has concluded bilateral nuclear cooperation agreements with 14 countries and one organization, which in order of entry into force of the agreement are: Canada, France, Australia, China, the U.S., the UK, the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), Kazakhstan, the ROK, Viet Nam, Jordan, Russia, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates, and India.

C Decommissioning of TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station and Handling of ALPS Treated Water

The work of decommissioning, contaminated water management, decontamination and environmental remediation at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station are challenging. However, Japan is making steady progress in these areas by leveraging the collective technologies and knowledge of the world, and in close cooperation with the IAEA, the expert organization in the field of nuclear energy. In April 2021, the Government of Japan announced its basic policy on the handling of ALPS treated water, and in July of the same year, signed a Terms of Reference (TOR) on Reviews of Safety Aspects of Handling ALPS treated Water at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station with the IAEA. Based on this TOR, the IAEA Task Force consisting of the IAEA officials and international experts selected by the IAEA has conducted third-party reviews on the Government of Japan and TEPCO in safety and regulatory aspects. The review on regulatory-related aspects was conducted in January 2023, and a comprehensive review on the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea was conducted from May to June.

On July 4, 2023, IAEA Director General Grossi visited Japan and handed to Prime Minister Kishida the Comprehensive Report compiled by the IAEA, summarizing these reviews conducted based on the TOR. The report concluded that (1) the approach to

the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea, and the associated activities, are consistent with relevant international safety standards, (2) that the discharge of the ALPS treated water will have a negligible radiological impact on people and the environment, and (3) indicated the IAEA's plans to continue implementing additional reviews and monitoring during and after the discharge.

After the Inter-Ministerial Council for Contaminated Water, Treated Water and Decommissioning Issues and the Inter-Ministerial Council for Steady Implementation of the Basic Policy on Handling ALPS Treated Water were held on August 22, the discharge of ALPS treated water commenced on August 24. Based on the monitoring results to date, it has been confirmed that ALPS treated water is being discharged safely and as planned.

The IAEA experts and third-party analysis laboratories (Canada, China, and the ROK) conducted marine monitoring from October 16 to 23 (specifically, this involved the collection of sea water and sediment in the vicinity of TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, fishery products in Fukushima Prefecture and preparation of the collected samples). From October 24 to 27, the IAEA Task Force visited Japan and conducted its first review after the start of the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea. The report on this review was published by the IAEA in January 2024.

In order to make progress in the decommissioning works and in recovery with the support and correct understanding of the international community, the Government of Japan periodically releases comprehensive reports through the IAEA that cover matters such as progress in decommissioning and contaminated water management at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, results of the monitoring of air dose rate and seawater radioactivity concentration, and food safety. In addition, Japan submits reports on the current situation to the relevant organizations, including Diplomatic Missions in Tokyo and to the IAEA. Furthermore, Japan has organized more than 100 briefing sessions to the Diplomatic Missions in Tokyo since the accident and provided and disseminated information through Japanese diplomatic missions overseas or through social media and other means.



Collecting samples of surface seawater for H-3 analysis off the coast of TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station (October, Fukushima Prefecture; Photo: Nuclear Regulation Authority)

Regarding the safety of discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea, the Government of Japan continues to provide information sincerely to the international community in a highly transparent manner, based on scientific evidence, and to respond appropriately to claims that may encourage reputational damage. (See the Special Feature on page 246).

(4) Biological and Chemical Weapons

A Biological Weapons

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)³⁸ is the only multilateral legal framework comprehensively prohibiting the development, production and possession of biological weapons. However, how to reinforce the Convention is a challenge as there are neither provisions on measures to verify compliance with the BWC nor an implementing organization for the Convention.

Since 2006, decisions have been made to establish the Implementation Support Unit (fulfilling the functions of a Secretariat) and to hold intersessional meetings twice a year in between the Review Conferences held every five years. During this time, progress has been made with respect to initiatives aimed at strengthening the BWC regime.

At the 9th Review Conference of the BWC held in 2022, it was decided that a working group open to all States Parties would be established, with a view to strengthening all aspects of the implementation of the BWC. The working group started meeting from 2023,

and States Parties are discussing measures on international cooperation, the scientific and technological developments, and compliance and verification relevant to the BWC.

B Chemical Weapons

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)³⁹ comprehensively prohibits the development, production, stockpiling, and use of chemical weapons, and stipulates that all existing chemical weapons must be destroyed. Compliance is ensured through a verification system consisting of declarations and inspections, making this Convention a groundbreaking international agreement on the disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The implementing body of the CWC is the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which is based in The Hague, the Netherlands. Along with the UN, the OPCW has played a key role in the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons. Its extensive efforts toward the realization of a world without chemical weapons were highly acclaimed, and the Organisation was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013. In May 2023, the Center for Chemistry and Technology (CCT), which Japan has also contributed funding to, was established. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs YOSHIKAWA Yuumi attended the opening ceremony of this Center.

Japan, which has a highly developed chemicals industry and numerous chemicals factories, also accepts numerous OPCW inspections. Japan also actively cooperates with the OPCW in many other concrete ways, including measures to increase the number of member states and strengthening national implementation measures by States Parties with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of the Convention. Moreover, under the CWC, Japan aims to complete, as soon as possible, the destruction of chemical weapons of the former Japanese Army abandoned in Chinese territory by working in cooperation with China.

³⁸ Entered into force in March 1975. As of December 2023, 185 countries or regions are parties to the BWC.

³⁹ Entered into force in April 1997. As of December 2023, 193 countries or regions are parties to the CWC.

SPECIAL
FEATURE

The Safety of the Discharge of ALPS Treated Water

On August 24, Tokyo Electric Power Company's (TEPCO) Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station started discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea. As for the safety of the discharge of ALPS treated water, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Comprehensive Report has shown that the discharge is consistent with relevant international safety standards. The Government of Japan is taking the opportunity of international conferences and bilateral meetings to explain Japan's efforts based on scientific evidence in a highly transparent and sincere manner, as well as utilizing social media and other means to actively disseminate information to the world.

In April 2021, the Government of Japan announced its basic policy on the handling of ALPS treated water, and in July of the same year, signed a Terms of Reference (TOR) on Reviews of Safety Aspects of Handling ALPS Treated Water at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station with the IAEA. Based on this TOR, the IAEA Task Force consisting of the IAEA officials and international experts selected by the IAEA has conducted third-party reviews on the Government of Japan and TEPCO in safety and regulatory aspects.

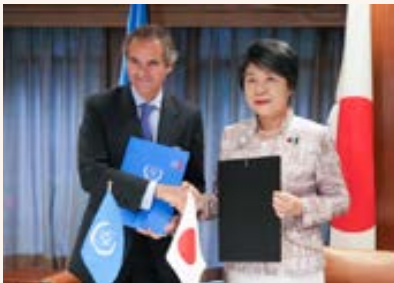
On July 4, 2023, IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi presented to Prime Minister Kishida the IAEA Comprehensive Report, summarizing these reviews conducted based on the TOR. The report concluded that the approach to the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea, and the associated activities, are consistent with relevant international safety standards, and that the discharge of ALPS treated water will have a negligible radiological impact on people and the environment. The IAEA also indicated its plans to continue implementing additional reviews and monitoring during and after the discharge.

Even after the discharge of ALPS treated water commenced on August 24, Japan has continued to work closely with the IAEA to conduct multi-layered monitoring in the following three areas: (1) monitoring of treated water in tanks; (2) real time monitoring; and, (3) sea area monitoring. Based on the monitoring results to date, it has been confirmed that ALPS treated water is being discharged safely as planned. Furthermore, there is growing understanding toward the discharge of ALPS treated water, with countries in a broad range of regions expressing their support and appreciation for the IAEA's efforts.

On September 18, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and IAEA Director General Grossi signed the Memorandum of



IAEA Director General Grossi paying a courtesy call to Prime Minister Kishida (July 4, Tokyo. Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)



Meeting between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and IAEA Director General Grossi, and signing ceremony (September 18, New York, U.S.)

Cooperation between Japan and the IAEA concerning ALPS treated water. At the meeting following the signing ceremony, Foreign Minister Kamikawa stated that this memorandum reaffirms Japan's cooperation with the IAEA such as its continued involvement in review and monitoring and will further contribute to enhancing the international community's confidence in the safety of the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea.

Going forward, the Government of Japan will continue to explain Japan's position sincerely and transparently to the international community as it undergoes reviews by the IAEA, as well as to disseminate information based on scientific evidence in a highly transparent manner, such as by promptly publishing the results of monitoring activities.

(5) Conventional Weapons

Conventional weapons generally refer to arms other than weapons of mass destruction and include a wide variety of weapons ranging from landmines, tanks, and artillery to small arms and light weapons such as handguns. The problem of conventional weapons, which are used widely in actual wars and cause injury and death to civilians, is serious in light of both national security and humanitarian concerns. The disarmament agenda presented in 2018 by UN Secretary-General António Guterres categorizes disarmament of conventional weapons as one of the three pillars, “Disarmament that Saves Lives.” Japan continues to make active efforts through international cooperation and support toward matters concerning conventional weapons, and participates in discussions at the relevant conferences.

A Small Arms and Light Weapons

Described as “the real weapons of mass destruction” due to the many human lives they take, small arms and light weapons continue to proliferate due to the ease with which they can be obtained and used. They contribute to conflict prolongation and escalation, hindering the restoration of public security and post-conflict reconstruction and development. Since 2001, Japan has been working with other countries to submit a resolution on the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons to the UN General Assembly, and the resolution has been adopted every year. In 2023, Japan served in the role of drafting this resolution. In areas around the world, Japan has also provided support for projects to address the issue of small arms and light weapons, including training and the collection and destruction of weapons. In 2019, Japan contributed 2 million U.S. dollars to a mechanism for preventing small arms established under UN Secretary-General Guterres’ disarmament agenda, and in 2022, through this mechanism, projects on small arms and light weapons were launched in Cameroon, Jamaica, and South Sudan.

B The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)⁴⁰

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which seeks to establish common standards to regulate international trade and

prevent the illicit transfer of arms, entered into force in December 2014. As one of the original co-authors of the UN General Assembly resolution that initiated a consideration of the Treaty, Japan has taken the lead in discussions and negotiations in the UN and contributed significantly to the establishment of the Treaty. Moreover, after the Treaty entered into force, Japan has continued to contribute actively in ways such as hosting the Fourth Conference of States Parties to the ATT in Tokyo as the first chair country elected from the Asia-Pacific region in August 2018. At the Ninth Conference of States Parties to the ATT, Japan contributed actively to discussions related to the universalization of the treaty, transparency and reporting, and promotion of implementation.

C Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, CCW)⁴¹

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) prohibits or restricts the use of conventional weapons that are deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects. It comprises a framework convention that sets forth procedural and other matters, as well as five annexed protocols that regulate individual conventional arms. The framework convention entered into force in 1983. Japan has ratified the framework convention and annexed Protocols I to IV, including the amended Protocol II. Prompted by concerns in the international community about the rapidly advancing military applications of science and technology, meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) have been held under the CCW framework since 2017, and 11 guiding principles on LAWS were formulated in 2019. Japan has continued to contribute actively and constructively to such discussions on international rule-making. In March 2023, Japan submitted the “Draft articles on autonomous weapon systems – prohibitions and other regulatory measures

⁴⁰ As of December 2023, there are 113 states and regions that are parties to the ATT. Japan signed the Treaty on the day that it was released for signing and became a State Party in May 2014.

⁴¹ As of December 2023, 126 countries and regions are parties to the CCW.

on the basis of international humanitarian law” to the GGE, jointly with the U.S., the UK, Australia, Canada, and the ROK. As a result of active discussions at the GGE in March and May, the report was adopted by consensus which includes the view that weapon systems must not be used if they are incapable of being used in compliance with IHL, and that other weapon systems should be subject to necessary restrictions to ensure compliance with IHL.

Against the backdrop of increasingly active discussions on the impact of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI) on the military domain, the first Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain (REAIM) Summit was held in the Netherlands in February. Furthermore, the first meeting on the Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy, led by the U.S., was held in November.

D Anti-Personnel Mines

Since the conclusion of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention)⁴² in 1998, Japan has continued to promote comprehensive measures under the Convention, including the effective prohibition of anti-personnel mines and strengthening of support for mine-affected countries. Along with calling on countries in the Asia-Pacific region to ratify or accede to the Convention, Japan has also been steadily engaged in international cooperation through landmine clearance, victim assistance and other activities in the international community, from the viewpoint of the “Humanitarian- Development-Peace Nexus.”

At the 21st Meeting of the States Parties of the Ottawa Convention held in Geneva in November, approval was granted for Cambodia to preside over the Fifth Review Conference in 2024, and for Japan to preside over the 22nd Meeting of the States Parties in 2025.

E Cluster Munitions⁴³

The international community takes seriously the humanitarian consequences brought about by cluster munitions. Japan is therefore taking steps to address this issue via victim assistance and unexploded ordnance clearance.⁴⁴ Japan is also continuing its efforts to increase the number of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM).⁴⁵ At the 11th Meeting of States Parties to the CCM held in September, Japan participated in discussions concerning these issues and shared its proactive efforts.

5 Japan's Efforts at the United Nations

(1) Japan-UN Relationship

The UN is an international organization that nearly all the countries in the world are members of (193 countries as of December 2023). It addresses various challenges in diverse areas such as conflict resolution and peacebuilding, counter-terrorism, disarmament and non-proliferation, poverty and development, human rights, refugee issues, environment and climate change issues, disaster risk reduction, and public health.

Since joining the UN in 1956, Japan has leveraged both universality and expertise to realize policy aims through multilateral cooperation in a wide range of areas, including the three pillars of the UN—peace and security, development, and human rights. Japan is serving for the 12th time as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council since January 2023, more frequent than any other UN Member State, and playing a key role in the maintenance of international peace and security. In order to support such activities, the Government of Japan financially contributes to the UN alongside actively engaging in the organizational aspects (management) of the UN. Japan also supports Japanese staff working in the UN to obtain important posts (See Chapter 4, Section 1, 2(1)). To realize strong and effective multilateralism that can protect

⁴² The Convention, which entered into force in March 1999, bans the use and production of anti-personnel mines while mandating the destruction of stockpiled mines and the clearance of buried mines. As of December 2023, there are 164 states and regions that are parties to the Convention, including Japan.

⁴³ Generally speaking, it refers to bombs or shells in the form of large containers that open midair and release submunitions that spread over a wide area. They are said to be highly likely to not explode on impact, leading to the problem of civilians being accidentally killed or injured.

⁴⁴ See the White Paper on Development Cooperation for specific efforts on international cooperation regarding cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines.

⁴⁵ Entered into force in August 2010, it prohibits the use, possession, or production of cluster munitions, while mandating the clearance of cluster munitions in contaminated areas and the destruction of stockpiled cluster munitions. There are 112 states and regions that are parties to the Convention, including Japan (as of December 2023)

and strengthen “human dignity,” Japan continues to work proactively to strengthen the functions of the UN, including UN Security Council reform.

(2) Major Events in 2023

The High-Level Week of the 78th UN General Assembly convened in September. Prime Minister Kishida and Foreign Minister Kamikawa attended from Japan.

In the General Debate of the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Kishida shed a new light on “human dignity” at a time when the international community is facing multiple crises and increasingly being divided, and advocated “human-centered international cooperation” to overcome differences in national regimes or values. He stressed the need to consolidate the trend of nuclear disarmament mainstreaming, the importance of the rule of law, and of UN Security Council reform to strengthen the UN as a part of international cooperation to protect and strengthen “human dignity”.

Prime Minister Kishida attended the following five multilateral meetings during the High-Level Week.

At the Commemorative High-Level Event on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) co-hosted by Japan, the Philippines, and Australia, Prime Minister Kishida delivered a keynote speech. He pointed out that, for the first time since the peak of the Cold War, the world is on the cusp of a reversal of the decreasing trend of the global number of nuclear arsenals, making it even more necessary to start early negotiations on an FMCT. In light of that, 2023 marks the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution calling for an FMCT, this event urged all countries to reinvigorate discussions by refocusing political attention toward an FMCT, and to use it as a new opportunity to work together toward the early commencement of negotiations.

At the 2023 SDG Summit, Prime Minister Kishida reiterated that, with the international community facing various difficulties, now is the time to return to the starting point of the SDGs, “Leave No One Behind,” and that “human security,” which Japan has consistently advocated, is key to achieving the SDGs

based on “human dignity.” He clearly expressed Japan’s determination to strongly lead the international community’s efforts to achieve the SDGs and thereby open the way for our future.

At the Security Council High Level Open Debate on “Upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter through effective multilateralism: maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine,” Prime Minister Kishida once again strongly condemned Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and emphasized the importance of realizing peace based on the principles of the UN Charter. He also expressed his determination to aim for “multilateralism rooted in a spirit of solidarity,” while protecting the dignity of people suffering in various parts of the world. Furthermore, he called for a world of cooperation rather than division and confrontation, along with concrete action to strengthen the functions of the UN, including UN Security Council reform.

At the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on universal health coverage (UHC), Prime Minister Kishida once again called on the international community to take actions toward achieving UHC.

Prime Minister also attended the G7 Health Follow-up Side Event. In his remarks, he affirmed the progress of the “MCM (Medical Countermeasures) Delivery Partnership for Equitable Access (MCDP),”⁴⁶ one of outcomes of the G7 Hiroshima Summit in the area of health, and the “Impact Investment Initiative for Global Health (Triple I for GH).”⁴⁷ He also announced the launch of a new ODA loan scheme to enable the flexible and effective mobilization of funds necessary for prevention, preparedness, and response (PPR) in developing countries.

Prime Minister Kishida took the opportunity of the High-Level Week to hold two bilateral summit meetings, actively exchanging opinions on bilateral relations as well as on various issues in the international arena. During his stay in New York, he also attended the Global Goalkeepers Award 2023 ceremony and the Global Citizenship Awards annual gala. Furthermore, he delivered remarks to the Economic Club of New York, and communicated the achievements under the Kishida administration over

⁴⁶ Launched at the G7 Hiroshima Summit, this is an international cooperation framework that focuses on the delivery of medical countermeasures (MCMs) to ensure equitable access to MCMs.

⁴⁷ An initiative that aims to mobilize private financial resources to resolve issues in the global health sector, through impact investments which intend to generate a measurable socially and/or environmentally beneficial impact alongside a financial return.



Prime Minister Kishida delivering an address at the General Debate of the UN General Assembly (September 19, New York, U.S.; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

the past year and its determination for the future, mainly in the economic field, such as the reform of the asset management sector and asset ownership to promote Japan as a Leading Asset Management Center. He further spoke about the Kishida administration's future intentions, and called for investment in Japan.

Foreign Minister Kamikawa engaged in active diplomacy during the High-Level Week, attending a total of 12 multilateral meetings, including the Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the G4 countries on UN Security Council Reform, the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and the Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting, as well as 16 bilateral meetings and five summit events. In her meetings with various countries, Foreign Minister Kamikawa sent out a strong message on the rule of law and the importance of the UN, which should play a central role in that, and on strengthening the functions of the UN including UN Security Council reform. She also affirmed the importance of strongly promoting Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) as a part of Japan's diplomacy. Furthermore, she affirmed cooperation on regional affairs, such as in Ukraine and North Korea, and communicated to the international community Japan's position in areas such as health, disarmament, and environmental issues.

During the High-Level Week, Foreign Minister Kamikawa also met with Mr. Dennis Francis, President of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly. At the meeting, she emphasized the importance of strengthening the UN's functions, including UN Security Council reform, and expressed Japan's support for strengthening the role and authority of the General Assembly and President of the General Assembly.



Prime Minister Kishida meeting with UN Secretary-General Guterres at the G7 Hiroshima Summit (May 21, Hiroshima City, Hiroshima Prefecture; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

UN Secretary-General António Guterres visited Japan to attend the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, and met with Prime Minister Kishida during his visit. Prime Minister Kishida emphasized the importance of maintaining and strengthening the NPT with regard to nuclear disarmament and hoped that Japan's efforts would deepen understanding about the reality of atomic bombings, leading to the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons. Secretary-General Guterres stated that he valued Japan's contributions thus far, and hoped to work even more closely with Japan on nuclear disarmament. Both sides shared their views on the importance of the UN reform and strengthening of its functions toward the realization of a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

(3) UN Security Council and its Reform

A UN Security Council

The UN Security Council holds the primary responsibility within the UN for maintaining international peace and security. It is composed of five permanent members and 10 non-permanent members that are elected by UN Member States (for two-year terms). The UN Security Council's agenda covers a wide range of areas from the peaceful settlement of disputes and addressing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, to peacebuilding and WPS. In recent years, new themes such as climate change and food security have also been covered. The UN Security Council also has a mandate to determine the details of activities in UN Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) and UN Special Political Missions (SPM).



Foreign Minister Hayashi hosting the Ministerial Open Debate on the Rule of Law at the UN Security Council (January 12, New York, U.S.)

Japan was elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in June 2022, and is serving its two-year term from January 2023 for the 12th time as a non-permanent member, more frequent than any other UN Member State (See the Special Feature on page 252). In January, when Japan held the Security Council presidency, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited New York and hosted the ministerial Open Debate on the rule of law. Japan also hosted a meeting on peacebuilding during its presidency at the ambassadorial level. The UN Security Council has not been functioning effectively in its response to Russia's (a permanent member of the Council) aggression against Ukraine and North Korea's nuclear and missile activities that repeatedly violate UN Security Council resolutions and threaten the peace and security of Japan, the region, and the international community. Throughout its two-year term on the Council, Japan will communicate closely with other countries and engage in dialogues with the aim of maintaining and strengthening international order based on the rule of law while cooperating to enable the UN Security Council to fulfill its expected role. Japan will also contribute actively to discussions on the response to regional issues in the Middle East, Africa, and other regions, as well as on global issues such as climate change. As it has contributed during previous terms, Japan will continue to work on improving the work methods of the UN Security Council, including enhancing the efficiency and transparency of the Council.

B Reform of the UN Security Council

More than 75 years have passed since the UN was established, and the structure of the international community has significantly changed while the UN's functions have become diverse. Despite this, the composition of the UN Security Council has largely remained unchanged to this day. In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, a resolution that deplores the aggression by Russia and calls for the withdrawal of Russian troops was put to a vote in the UN Security Council. However, it was not adopted as Russia exercised its veto. Consequently, the UN Security Council was unable to take a coordinated response. This clearly shows that the UN Security Council cannot function effectively in response to situations such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine. There is a broadly shared view among the international community that an early reform of the UN Security Council is necessary to make the body more legitimate, effective, and representative.

To play an even more proactive role toward the realization of world peace and security through the UN, Japan has been making efforts to convince other countries to pursue an early UN Security Council reform, with the expansion of both permanent and non-permanent seats and Japan's admission as a permanent member.

C Recent Activities Regarding UN Security Council Reform

Since 2009, in the UN General Assembly, Member States have been engaging in the Intergovernmental Negotiations on UN Security Council reform. In 2023, five meetings took place between January and May. During the 77th session, a dedicated website was launched to broadcast parts of the IGN meetings online, and to store the relevant materials and statements by countries. At the end of June, following on from 2022, the decision to roll over the work of the 77th session to the 78th session was adopted by consensus at the UN General Assembly. In October, President Francis of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly reappointed the Permanent Representatives of Kuwait and Australia to the UN as co-chairs of the Intergovernmental Negotiations. The spotlight will be placed on how future discussions will progress under the new system.

SPECIAL
FEATURE

Serving as a Non-Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council

For two years from January 2023, Japan has taken on the responsible role of a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. This is the 12th time that Japan serves in this role, more times than any other UN Member State. Japan is working tirelessly in the UN Security Council every day for the peace and security of the international community.

● January 2023, Main Activities during Japan's Presidency of the UN Security Council

● Hosted the Ministerial Open Debate on the Rule of Law

Taking the opportunity of Japan's Presidency of the UN Security Council in January, Foreign Minister Hayashi hosted the Ministerial Open Debate on the Rule of Law in the UN Security Council on January 12. In the Open Debate, Foreign Minister Hayashi emphasized the following essential elements of the rule of law in light of the divisions among Member States as a result of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and other factors: firstly, observing the UN Charter, UN resolutions, and judgements by international tribunals, and other agreements in good faith; secondly, not allowing redrawing of borders by force or coercion; and, thirdly, cooperating with the Member States to stand up against violations of the UN Charter. He called on Member States for "uniting for the rule of law." 77 countries, including the foreign ministers of three countries, attended the Debate and many expressed their support to Japan's stance that the rule of law, not rule by force, is important.

● Hosted Open Debate on peacebuilding at Ambassadorial Level

On January 26, Japan hosted the UN Security Council Open Debate (Permanent Representative Level) on "Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace." Ambassador Ishikane, Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations, chaired the Debate. He shed light on the increasingly complex issues that the international community should address in order to realize sustainable peace, as well as the importance of the role of "people" in peacebuilding and provoked discussions toward strengthening the functions of the UN, including the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission.

This meeting demonstrated the widespread interest in peacebuilding among the international community. 74 countries in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Central and South America that have experienced conflict, island countries that have suffered from the impact of climate change, as well as Ukraine and its neighboring countries made statements.

● The role of Japan in subsidiary organs under the UN Security Council

Japan contributes actively to the activities of the UN Security Council, serving as Chair of the Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee and the Libya Sanctions Committee, and Vice-Chair of the Iraq Sanctions Committee, the UN Security Council 1718 Sanctions Committee, and the Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions. Japan also takes initiative in Security Council resolutions on Afghanistan as a co-penholder,¹ leading discussions on the situation in Afghanistan in the Council.

● Contributions to key issues

In response to the repeated launches of ballistic missiles by North Korea, Japan works closely with the U.S., the Republic of Korea (ROK), and other relevant countries to lead discussions in the UN Security Council. In August, a meeting on the situation in North Korea was held for the first time in six years, provoking international debate toward improving the human rights situation in North Korea, including the immediate resolution of the abductions issue. With regard to the situation in Ukraine, Foreign Minister Hayashi attended the Security Council Ministerial Debate in February, and Prime Minister Kishida attended the Security Council High Level Open Debate in September, during which they once again strongly condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine and emphasized the importance of the rule of law. With regard to the situation in Israel and Palestine, Japan worked in close coordination with the other members of the Security Council and contributed to the



Prime Minister Kishida attending the Security Council High Level Open Debate on "Upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter through effective multilateralism: maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine" (September 20, New York, U.S.; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

adoption of UN Security Council resolution 2712 calling for humanitarian pauses in the Gaza Strip, and UN Security Council resolution 2720 concerning the expansion of humanitarian assistance and monitoring in the Gaza Strip. Japan also contributed actively to discussions in meetings on the situation in other regions including Africa, Central and South America, as well as new themes such as food security, climate change, and artificial intelligence (AI).

In the face of various challenges confronting the international community, Japan will continue to contribute to the peace and security of the international community as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2024.

¹ Refers to the member of the Security Council that leads discussions on a particular agenda item and drafts documents such as resolutions and the chair's statements.

Japan also places great importance on its initiatives as a member of the G4 (Japan, India, Germany and Brazil), a group that cooperates on promoting UN Security Council reform. Foreign Minister Kamikawa attended the Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the G4 countries in September in conjunction with the High-Level Week of the UN General Assembly. At the meeting, the G4 Ministers shared their perceptions of the current situation regarding Security Council reform and discussed future directions of work, with recognition of the increasing importance of strengthening the functions of the UN, including Security Council reform, in order to restore confidence in the UN, which was damaged by Russia's aggression against Ukraine, among others. Foreign Minister Kamikawa called for striving for concrete actions toward the realization of Security Council reform, utilizing fora such as IGN, while looking ahead to the Summit of the Future in 2024 and the 80th Anniversary of the UN in 2025 as opportunities to build momentum for reform. On top of that, the G4 Ministers concurred to work closely with the President of the General Assembly for concrete discussion in the IGN and to cooperate with relevant countries including Africa and the U.S.



Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the G4 Countries on UN Security Council Reform (September 21, New York, U.S.)

to achieve concrete progress as soon as possible toward the realization of Security Council reform. Japan will continue to work closely with many countries and persevere toward the realization of UN Security Council reform.

(4) Organizational Aspects of the UN (Management)

A Management

UN Secretary-General Guterres positions reforms in the management of the UN along with peace efforts and development as issues of priority, and works continuously to enhance global governance. In 2021, he issued a report entitled "Our Common Agenda" which proposed concrete measures to adapt the UN to a new era. Japan supports the objectives of the reform with the hope that the UN will fulfill its mission more effectively and efficiently.

B Budget

The UN budget is mainly composed of the regular budget for general activities (an annual budget for the period from January to December), and the peacekeeping budget related to peacekeeping operations (an annual budget for the period from July to the following June).

With regard to the regular budget, a budget for 2024 amounting to approximately 3.59 billion U.S. dollars was approved in December 2023 at the UN General Assembly. The budget for peacekeeping operations for the period of 2023-2024 amounting to approximately 6.05 billion U.S. dollars in total was approved in June 2023.

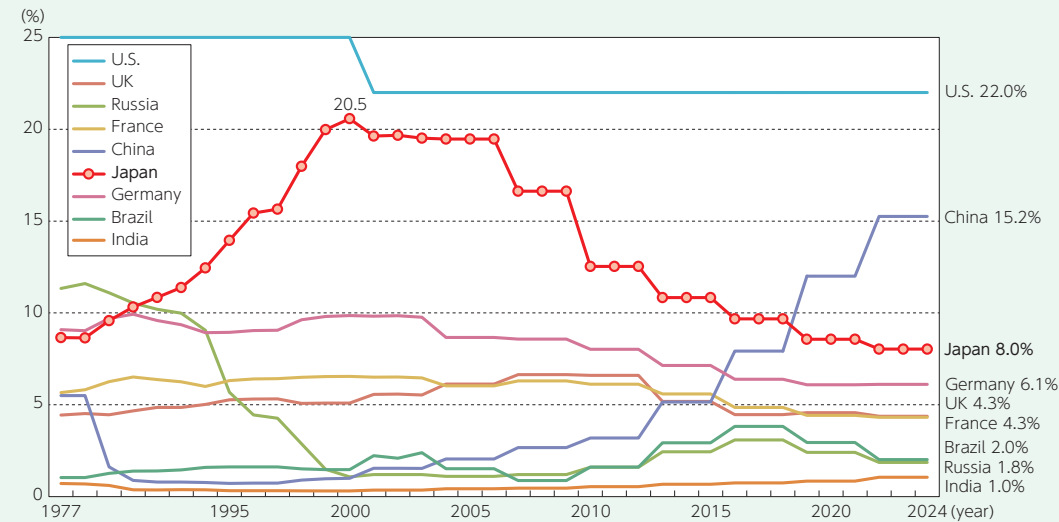
The budget to support UN activities is composed of assessed contributions paid by Member States and voluntary contributions provided in accordance with

Member States’ policy needs. With regard to assessed contributions, Japan currently ranks third after the U.S. and China. Japan contributed approximately 234.99 million U.S. dollars to the UN regular budget for 2023, and approximately 486.30 million U.S. dollars to the peacekeeping budget for 2023/24. As a major financial contributor, Japan has been encouraging the UN to make more efficient and effective use of its financial resources. The scale of assessments, which provides the basis for calculating the amount of assessed

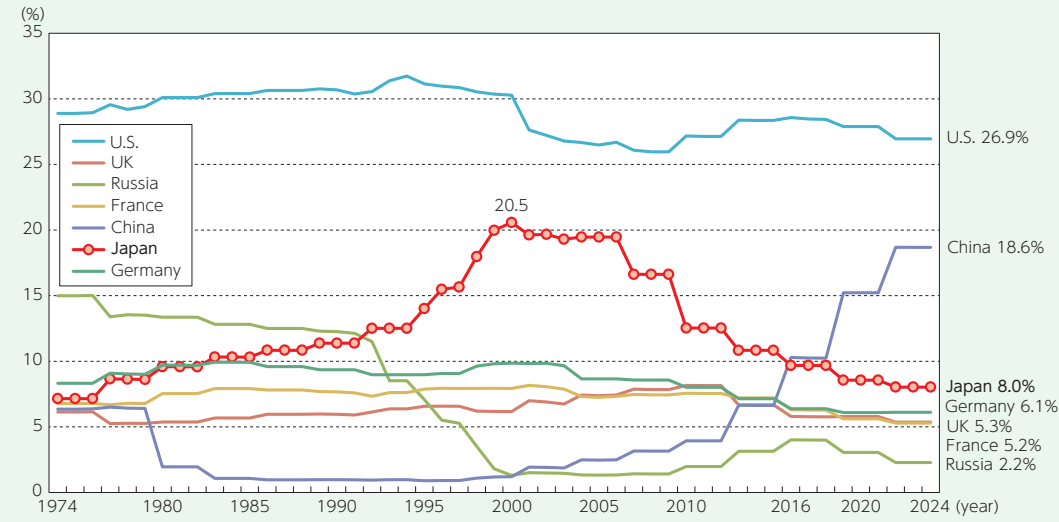
contributions, is revised every three years based on the capacities to pay of the Member States. Japan’s scale of assessment, revised at the end of 2021, is 8.033% (2022-2024), behind the U.S. and China.

Key bodies that address administrative and budgetary matters of the UN are the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Committee on Contributions. Both are standing subsidiary committees of the General Assembly and are comprised of members serving in their personal

Trends in UN Regular Budget Scale of Assessments of Top Contributors



Trends in UN PKO Budget Scale of Assessments of Top Contributors (%)



capacities. The ACABQ reviews the overall administrative and budgetary issues of the UN and makes recommendations to the General Assembly, while the Committee on Contributions submits a proposal on the scale of assessments of the regular budget for a decision to be made by all Member States at the General Assembly. Hence, both committees play an important role. Members from Japan have served continuously on both of these committees.

6 The Rule of Law in the International Community

The rule of law is, generally, the concept that recognizes the superiority of the law over all forms of power. It is an essential cornerstone of a fair and just society within a country. At the same time, it contributes to peace and stability in the international community and constitutes the basis of the international order that consists of friendly and equitable relations between states. In the international community, under the rule of law, we must not allow rule by force, and all countries must observe international law in good faith, and there must be no unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion. Japan promotes strengthening of the rule of law as one of the pillars of its foreign policy, and promotes rule-making in various fields as well as ensuring their proper implementation.

(1) Japan's Diplomacy to Strengthen the Rule of Law

Japan makes use of various opportunities, including international conferences, to affirm with other States the importance of a free and open international order based on the rule of law. In addition, Japan participates actively in rule-making in various sectors, contributing to the formation and development of a new international legal order. In order to promote the peaceful settlement of disputes and the maintenance of legal order, Japan also actively cooperates with judicial organizations to strengthen their functions via both human resource and financial contributions, and works proactively on international cooperation in relation to the rule of law by supporting the improvement of legal systems and organizing events on international law.



Foreign Minister Kamikawa meeting with President Donoghue of the ICJ (January 11, 2024, Hague, Netherlands)

With the very foundation of the international order being shaken as a result of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, it is becoming even more important to strengthen the rule of law. In his statement at the General Debate of the UN General Assembly held in September, Prime Minister Kishida emphasized that the principles of the UN Charter, such as sovereign equality, respect for territorial integrity, and the prohibition of the use of force, are fundamental principles of international law and provide the basis of the rule of law. He also advocated that international law exists for the benefit of weaker states, and declared Japan's resolve to protect the right of vulnerable nations and peoples to live in peace under the rule of law.

In January 2024, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held meetings with Judge Joan E. Donoghue, President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ); Judge Piotr Hofmański, President of the International Criminal Court (ICC); and Mr. Karim A. A. Khan KC, Prosecutor of the ICC in The Hague (Netherlands). She also met with Judge Tomas Heidar, President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) in Hamburg (Germany). In addition to sharing a sense of crisis on the current situation in the international community with its deepening divisions and confrontations, Foreign Minister Kamikawa expressed Japan's unwavering support for the role that international courts play for the rule of law and human dignity, and stated that Japan will advance diplomacy comprehensively based on dialogues and cooperation, so as to strengthen the rule of law in the international community.

A Peaceful Settlement of Disputes

In order to encourage peaceful settlement of disputes via international judicial institutions while striving to comply faithfully with international law, Japan accepts the compulsory jurisdiction⁴⁸ of the ICJ, the principal judicial organ of the UN, and constructively contributes to establishing the rule of law in the international community via cooperation in providing human and financial resources. For example, Japan is the largest financial contributor to the ICC and the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA). In terms of human resources, a number of Japanese judges serve on international judicial bodies as of 2023, including ICJ Judge IWASAWA Yuji (incumbent since 2018), Judge HORINOUCI Hidehisa to the ITLOS (incumbent since 2023), and Judge AKANE Tomoko to the ICC (incumbent since 2018 and elected as the President of ICC in March 2024). Through these contributions, Japan strives to enhance the effectiveness and universality of international courts and tribunals. With the aim of fostering human resources capable of playing an active role in international litigations in the future, Japan provides active support to Japanese nationals interning at international judicial organizations and other related organizations through the Support Program for Internships at International Courts and other International Organizations.

At the same time, in order to further strengthen its capacity in dealing with international litigations, Japan is engaged in efforts to enhance expertise on international judicial proceedings, and to create a strong organization that can perform well in international litigation by strengthening relationships with legal experts and law firms in and outside Japan, that are mainly active in proceedings at major international courts and tribunals. In the field of economy, the importance of dispute settlements based on World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements, Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA), and investment agreements has been growing in recent years. Against this backdrop, in the handling of dispute settlements under the WTO agreements and others, Japan engages in litigation work, such as preparation of written submissions, handling of evidence,

and preparation and participation in oral proceedings, in close cooperation with the relevant ministries and agencies as well as academic experts and practitioners specializing in international economic law both in Japan and abroad. It also advances initiatives such as analyzing case law and academic theories, and engages in dispute prevention. In these ways, Japan strives to strengthen its capacity for strategic and effective dispute settlement.

B International Rule-making

International rule-making to respond to issues the global community faces is one of the important efforts toward strengthening the rule of law. Along with actively promoting the conclusion of bilateral and multilateral treaties aimed at building a legal foundation for achieving goals it shares with other countries, Japan is demonstrating initiative starting at the planning phase in creating rules for developing international laws that reflect its ideals and positions in cross-sectoral efforts in the framework of the UN and other fora. Specifically, Japan has been actively involved in the rule-making processes within various international frameworks, including the codification of public international law at the International Law Commission (ILC) and the sixth Committee of the UN General Assembly, as well as the preparation of conventions and model laws in the field of private international law at fora such as the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH), the UN Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), and the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT). In the ILC, ASADA Masahiko, Professor of Doshisha University and Professor Emeritus of Kyoto University, serves as a member (incumbent from 2023) and is contributing to the development of international law by participating in the debates on draft articles. Japan also sends government representatives to various meetings of the HCCH, UNCITRAL and UNIDROIT, taking an active lead in the discussions. In particular, Japan has been showing its presence as a member state of UNCITRAL since the founding of the commission, such as by acceding to the United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting

⁴⁸ A declaration that States Parties to the Statute of the ICJ recognize the jurisdiction of the ICJ as compulsory ipso facto and without special agreement, in relation to any other state accepting the same obligation, in accordance with Article 36, paragraph 2 of its Statute. Only 74 countries, including Japan, have made such declaration to date (as of February 28, 2024).

from Mediation negotiated at UNCITRAL in 2023, and proposing and realizing the enlargement of the membership of UNCITRAL as well as projects in the field of dispute settlement to date. In UNIDROIT, Dr. KANDA Hideki, Professor of Gakushuin University as well as Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo serves as chair of the Digital Assets and Private Law working group (incumbent from 2014), and contributes to leading-edge discussions on digital finance.

C International Cooperation and Human Resource Development

Japan is also actively engaged in international cooperation on the rule of law, not only to promote the rule of law in the international community, but also to strengthen it within various countries. For example, to further develop the rule of law, Japan provides support for the development of legal systems, especially in Asian countries. It also participates constructively in the discussions and provides human and financial cooperation to the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO), the only inter-governmental organization in the Asia/Africa region on issues related to international law. In addition, Japan participates actively as an observer in the Committee of Legal Advisers on Public International Law (CAHDI), which examine questions related to public international law under the Council of Europe (CoE). In August, with the aim of fostering professionals in the field of international law, Japan organized the first Tokyo International Law Seminar, a practical training program in the field of international law for officials and legal experts from the Indo-Pacific region, as well as Japanese lawyers and international law scholars. As part of the Tokyo International Law Seminar, the 24th Asia Cup, an international law moot court competition for students in Asia including Japan, was also held, which aims to raise awareness of the importance of the peaceful settlement of disputes and to nurture future international lawyers and enhance exchanges among them (See the Special Feature on page 258).

(2) Initiatives in the Maritime Sector

For Japan, as a maritime nation, maintaining and strengthening maritime order based on the rule of law is an issue of the utmost importance. Therefore, Japan has consistently advocated for the “Three Principles of

the Rule of Law at Sea” to be followed by every nation ((a) making and clarifying claims based on international law; (b) not using force or coercion in trying to drive their claims; and (c) seeking to settle disputes by peaceful means). Prime Minister Kishida reiterated these principles in his policy speech related to the New Plan for a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP),” delivered in March.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) serves as a foundation for such rule of law at sea. The Convention has been ratified by 168 countries, including Japan (including some regions not officially recognized as nations by Japan; as of December 2023) and the EU. The Convention comprehensively provides for principles governing the sea, including the freedom of navigation and overflight of the high seas. It also stipulates rights and obligations under international law on the development and regulation of marine resources, among other things. The provisions of the Convention that concern areas such as territorial sea and exclusive economic zones (EEZ) are widely accepted among the international community, and the recognition that activities conducted on the seas ought to be carried out according to the provisions of the Convention is widely shared. As problems concerning the oceans and seas grow more complex and diverse, it is important to preserve and strengthen the maritime order based on the Convention, which serves as a comprehensive and universal legal framework.

To achieve the objectives of UNCLOS, several international organizations have been established based on UNCLOS. The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), established in 1996, fulfills an important role in the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes and the preservation and advancement of law and order at sea. The ITLOS deals with a wide range of cases, including the delimitation of maritime boundaries and the protection of the marine environment in recent years in particular, and the importance of the Tribunal has been growing. Japan attaches importance to the role played by the ITLOS and has successively dispatched Japanese judges to the Tribunal since its establishment. In the election of members of ITLOS held at the UN in June, Ambassador for UNCLOS HORINOUCHI Hidehisa was newly elected as a judge (nine-year term starting from October 2023).

**SPECIAL
FEATURE**

The First Tokyo International Law Seminar

In August, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) organized the first Tokyo International Law Seminar, an international law training program for officials and legal experts, at the United Nations University, Tokyo.

The Seminar aims to contribute to peace guided by the rule of law by expanding the common knowledge of international law and promoting exchanges among officials and legal experts from Asia and Africa, and also to foster international law capacity building in Japan by welcoming the participation of Japanese lawyers and young international law scholars.

The Seminar provided lectures on various areas of international law of particular practical importance, such as the use of force, the law of the sea, immunity, international humanitarian law, international criminal law, international economic law, and international environmental law, as well as on new areas such as cyber-related international law, and also offered practical lectures on dispute resolution practices in international justice and international arbitration. For the lecturers, MOFA invited internationally prominent world-leading international law experts from abroad, such as Dapo Akande, Professor of University of Oxford, Paul Reichler, international lawyer at 11 KBW, and Gary Born, partner at WilmerHale, and leading Japanese experts including IWASAWA Yuji, Judge of International Court of Justice (ICJ) also joined the Seminar as the lecturers.

In addition, “Asia Cup,” an international law moot court competition for students in Asia that has been held annually in Japan since 1999, was held as a part of the Tokyo International Law Seminar. Student teams from 14 countries that had been selected on the basis of the preliminary examination of written pleadings competed in the oral rounds held in Japan and deepened mutual exchanges.

Consequently, the first Tokyo International Law Seminar provided an invaluable opportunity for international law experts and practitioners, as well as future international lawyers from Japan and abroad, to gather in Japan to learn together about the important aspects of international law, and to foster friendship and build a network. This “Japan originated” initiative, which was achieved with the cooperation of various legal professionals in Japan, including the Japan Federation of Bar Associations, Japanese Society of International Law, and Japanese law firms, received a high reputation from many participants.

Amid the growing importance of maintaining and strengthening an international order based on the rule of law in recent years, in 2023, Japan put effort into leading international discussions on the pursuance of the rule of law through observing international law in good faith. These efforts include calling for unity under the rule of law at the UN Security Council and appealing to strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law as President of the G7. The Tokyo International Law Seminar is one of the initiatives under the new plan for a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” announced by Prime Minister Kishida in March, and MOFA intends to further expand this Seminar in the future.



Professor Akande giving a lecture (August, Tokyo)



Commemorative photograph of the Seminar participants (August, Tokyo)

The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) plays an important role in the operation of the system for establishing the outer limits of the continental shelf. Since its establishment, Japan has continued to cooperate with the Commission in terms of both human and financial resources, through means such as continuously producing members (Japan's current member is Professor YAMAZAKI Toshitsugu from the University of Tokyo (term ends on June 15, 2028)). In the International Seabed Authority (ISA) established for the primary purpose of administering mineral resources in the Area (international deep seabed zone), during three parts of the Council's Session held in 2023, deliberations were held on regulations concerning the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. Japan participates actively in negotiations to ensure that its position is reflected in the regulations.

In response to growing interest from the international community on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in the high seas and the Area, the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) whose discussions on this Agreement commenced in the UN in 2004 and whose articles have been under negotiations since 2018, was adopted at the UN Headquarters in New York on June 19. Japan participated actively in the negotiations for this Agreement from the position of emphasizing the balance between conservation and sustainable use (See the Special Feature on page 260).

(3) Initiatives in the Political and Security Fields

In order to strengthen its legal basis for diplomatic activities, Japan is actively engaged in concluding international agreements in the political and security field. For instance, Reciprocal Access Agreements (RAA) establish procedures for the cooperative activities conducted by the defense force of one country while visiting another country, and define a status of the visiting force. The RAA between Japan and Australia entered into force in August and that between Japan and the UK in October respectively. Japan also commenced negotiations on a RAA with the Philippines

in November. On December 24, Japan and Djibouti signed an Exchange of Notes (entered into force on the same date) to apply, *mutatis mutandis*, the provisions of the Notes exchanged between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Republic of Djibouti in 2009, to the activities which are mutually determined by the two governments. This is aimed at securing the status of the Self-Defense Forces to undertake measures to protect and transport Japanese nationals overseas, etc. and to improve temporary preparedness in anticipation of that possibility. With regard to Agreements concerning Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services ("Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement," or ACSA), which establishes a framework such as the settlement procedures for the reciprocal provision of supplies and services between the Self-Defense Forces and the military forces of other countries, Japan commenced negotiations with Germany in September and signed an agreement in January 2024. In addition to these, Japan has also further advanced efforts to conclude Agreements concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, which set out provisions on the handling of defense equipment and technologies to be transferred, as well as Agreements on the Security of Information, which serve as the basis for sharing classified information on security with the relevant countries. With regard to Agreements concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, Japan signed an agreement with the United Arab Emirates in May (entered into force in January 2024), and with Singapore on June 3 (entered into force on the same date).

(4) Initiatives in the Fields of the Economy and Society

The conclusion and implementation of international agreements that bring legal discipline to cooperative relationships with other countries in the economic sphere remain important for promoting the liberalization of trade and investment, as well as people-to-people exchanges, and for strengthening the foundations for the overseas activities of Japanese citizens and companies. The agreements that Japan negotiated and signed or concluded in 2023 include tax conventions, investment treaties, and social security agreements with various countries and regions. Furthermore, Japan also

SPECIAL
FEATURE

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the Diversifying Challenges of the Oceans - From the Perspective of the Marine Environment

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), adopted by the UN in 1982 and also known as the “Constitution for the Oceans,” comprehensively stipulates rights and obligations related to maritime activities under international law. On the other hand, climate change and the advancement of technology have resulted in the diversification of challenges to the oceans that the international community has been confronted with in recent years. Among these are issues that had not been anticipated during the drafting of UNCLOS, and discussions are ongoing within the international community on how to address these new challenges under the UNCLOS framework. From the perspective of the marine environment, this Special Feature introduces “sea level rise” and “marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction” as new issues in maritime law that the international community is working to address.

● Impact of rising sea levels on baselines

Climate change is attracting much attention as a pressing issue that the international community faces. When sea levels rise due to climate change, coastlines may regress, resulting in changes to the outer edges of territorial waters for countries that are surrounded by the ocean in particular. This has serious repercussions. For this reason, within the field of international law, discussions are taking place in fora including the United Nations International Law Commission (ILC) on whether countries are permitted to continue recognizing existing territorial baselines and maritime zones without changing them, while placing emphasis on legal stability.

The problem of sea-level rise is also of great importance to Japan as the maritime nation, and Japan is working to strengthen cooperation with other countries including the Pacific Island countries. In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi conveyed to the Delegation of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) that Japan has decided to take the position that it is permissible to preserve the existing baselines and maritime zones established in accordance with UNCLOS, notwithstanding the regression of coastlines due to climate-change-related sea-level rise. Furthermore, Prime Minister Kishida also expressed this position to the world in his address at the General Debate during the High-Level Week of the UN General Assembly in September, and took the lead in discussions within the international community.

● Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ)

The international community also has strong interest in the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity and is advancing initiatives in this area. With regard to the conservation of the biological diversity of maritime zones over which coastal states can exercise their jurisdiction (territorial sea, exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and continental shelf), there is the Convention on Biological Diversity which entered into force in 1993. However, in response to growing international recognition of the need for similar rules to other maritime zones (the high seas and the Area (international deep seabed zone)), the “Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement)” was adopted in June 2023. Discussions on this matter commenced at the UN in 2004, and Japan has been participating actively in negotiations to ensure that the resulting agreement strikes a balance between “conservation” and “sustainable use,” and is an effective and universal agreement that many countries will participate in. Discussions and negotiations spanning close to 20 years eventually came to fruition, and Japan welcomes the progress in rule-making for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in the high seas and the Area.

While the international community is confronted by new challenges with the oceans, Japan has been leading discussions within the international community and striving to maintain and strengthen maritime order based on UNCLOS.



Adoption of the BBNJ Agreement in the UN (June, U.S.
Photo: UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe)

engaged actively in negotiations on EPAs and other agreements, with the aim of expanding free and fair economic spheres and strengthening wide-ranging economic relationships.

With regard to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTTP), the signing of the Protocol on the Accession of the UK to the CPTTP took place in July, and the Diet of Japan granted approval for its conclusion in December. As for the Japan-EU EPA, Japan and the EU took the opportunity of the Japan-EU High-level Economic Dialogue held in October to announce that they had reached an agreement in principle on negotiations to include provisions on the free flow of data.

Furthermore, with a view to protecting and enhancing the livelihoods and activities of Japanese citizens and companies, Japan is working on the proper implementation of existing international agreements as well as utilizing the dispute settlement system of the WTO.

In social areas such as human rights, labor, the environment, health, fisheries, maritime affairs, aviation, space, and postal affairs, which are closely linked to the daily lives of the people, Japan actively participates in negotiations of international agreements to ensure that Japan's positions are reflected and also concludes such agreements. For example, in the space sector, the Framework Agreement between Japan and the United States of America for Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space was concluded in June, and in the aviation sector, the Japan-EU Agreement on Bilateral Agreements between Japan and the Member States of the EU for Air Services was concluded in July.

(5) Initiatives in the Field of Criminal Justice

The ICC is the first-ever permanent international criminal court to prosecute and punish, in accordance with international law, individuals who have committed the most serious crimes of concern to the international community. Since becoming a State Party to the ICC Rome Statute in October 2007, Japan has consistently supported the ICC's activities and cooperated with

the Court in various ways. Fiscally, Japan is the largest contributor to the ICC, accounting for approximately 15% of the entire assessed contributions to the Court as of 2023. Moreover, Japan has consistently produced judges since its accession to the ICC. AKANE Tomoko, former Ambassador for International Judicial Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Public Prosecutor at the Supreme Public Prosecutors Office of Japan serves as a judge (elected as President of the ICC in March 2024). Japan also cooperates on the activities of the ICC in the aspect of human resources, with YAMADA Jun, Deputy Secretary-General of the Asian African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO) newly elected as a member of Committee on Budget and Finance, among others. As the ICC evolves into a full-fledged international criminal justice institution, it is imperative to secure cooperation with the ICC, establish the principle of complementarity, and to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in its judicial procedures. Japan actively engages in addressing these challenges, such as through its participation in the working groups of the Assembly of States Parties.

Furthermore, in the face of an increase of cross-border crimes in recent years, Japan is further working on ensuring judicial cooperation in the criminal sector, such as the mutual submission of necessary evidence with other countries. Specifically, as efforts to improve legal frameworks for promoting international cooperation in the field of criminal justice, Japan has been working on negotiations toward concluding international agreements such as the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (MLAT)⁴⁹, the Treaty on Extradition,⁵⁰ and the Treaty on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons.⁵¹ In August, Japan concluded the Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime, which is a multilateral framework related to international cooperation. In June, Japan and Brazil reached an agreement in principle on the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, and signed it in January 2024.

⁴⁹ A legal framework that allows for efficient and prompt cooperation with legal authorities of other countries in investigations, prosecution, and other criminal procedures.

⁵⁰ A legal framework having comprehensive and detailed provisions regarding the extradition of criminals to enable more effective cooperation for repressing crime.

⁵¹ A legal framework aiming to facilitate the social rehabilitation of sentenced persons by giving them the opportunity to serve their sentences in their own countries.

7 Human Rights

There is growing international concern about the human rights situations in various parts of the world. The protection and promotion of human rights is the foundation for peace and stability in the international community. Japan recognizes that human rights are universal values and that the protection of human rights is the basic responsibility of all countries, regardless of differences in the method of achieving this goal and their cultures. While speaking out firmly against any serious violation of human rights, Japan considers, under the basic principle of “dialogue” and “cooperation,” that it is important to promote voluntary efforts of each country through bilateral dialogues and cooperation with countries that are working toward democratization and the protection of human rights. In addition, while advocating the standpoint of bridge-building in Asia and protection of socially vulnerable people, Japan puts effort into improving the global human rights situation through bilateral dialogues, proactive participation in multilateral forums such as the UN, and constructive dialogues with the UN human rights mechanisms. With regard to bilateral dialogues, Japan and the U.S. launched the new Japan-U.S. Strategic Dialogue on Democratic Resilience, and the first session of this dialogue took place in February (Tokyo). The 12th Japan-Cambodia Human Rights Dialogue (Phnom Penh) was held in August, and the 14th Japan-Iran Human Rights Dialogue (Tokyo) was held in October. Both sides shared information about their respective measures in the field of human rights, and exchanged views on cooperation in multilateral fora. At the Third Japan Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Policy Dialogue in November, discussions were held on strengthening cooperation between Japan and OHCHR, and the two sides exchanged views on Japan’s efforts in the field of human rights, regional human rights situations, including in Asia, and other matters.

(1) Initiatives within the UN

A UN Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council holds sessions throughout the year in Geneva (three regular sessions per year) to discuss issues and make recommendations concerning

the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Special Session on the human rights impact of the ongoing conflict in Sudan was convened in May, and a resolution on the human rights impact of the conflict in Sudan was adopted. Japan has served as a member of the Council for five terms until 2022, and was also elected in the election of the Human Rights Council members held in October for the term from January 2024 to December 2026 (sixth term).

At the high-level segment of the 52nd Session of the Human Rights Council held in February and March, NAKATANI Gen, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister of Japan for international human rights issues, delivered a statement. He stated that Japan firmly rejects Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, which is an outrageous act that shakes the very foundation of the international order, and called on the international community to unite once again to take action. He also spoke about Japan’s continued determination to contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights in Asia and the world, and stressed the importance of the immediate resolution of the abductions issue. Furthermore, he expressed Japan’s deep concerns over the human rights situation in China including Hong Kong and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and urged China to take concrete actions. He also introduced Japan’s latest initiatives in the fields of business and human rights; elimination of discrimination against persons affected by Hansen’s disease and their family members; realization of a society where diversity is respected and all people value each other’s human rights and individual dignity, and where people can live their lives on their own terms; and the protection and promotion of women’s human rights. The resolution on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea), submitted by the EU and co-sponsored by Japan, was adopted without a vote at the same session (adopted for 16 consecutive years). This resolution strongly demands again that North Korea sincerely listen to the voices of the victims and their families, clarify the fate and whereabouts of disappeared persons and faithfully provide accurate, detailed, and full information promptly to the families of victims, and ensure the realization of the immediate return of all abductees. The resolution

also urges North Korea to engage in constructive dialogues with the parties concerned.

At the 53rd Session convened in June and July, Japan, as the main sponsor, submitted a draft resolution on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy (Hansen's disease) and their family members. This resolution, adopted without a vote, is centered on extending the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy (Hansen's disease) and their family members, for a period of three years, with the aim of eliminating discrimination and prejudices against persons affected by the disease and their family members that hinder their participation as equal members of society, for the realization of their enjoyment of human rights in all regions of the world.

At the 54th Session held in September and October, Japan, as the main sponsor, submitted a draft resolution on the human rights situation in Cambodia. This resolution was adopted without a vote. It reflects the concern of the international community over the human rights situation in Cambodia and encourages the Government of Cambodia to put efforts into improving the human rights situation. In addition, it also decided to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia for two years.

B The Third Committee of the UN General Assembly

The Third Committee of the UN General Assembly is, along with the Human Rights Council, the UN's main forum focused on human rights. Generally, in October and November, the Committee discusses a wide range of issues, including those concerning social development, women, children, racial discrimination, refugees, crime prevention and criminal justice, as well as the human rights situations in North Korea, Syria and Iran, among others. Resolutions adopted by the Third Committee are then adopted by a plenary session of the General Assembly, contributing to the development of international norms.

At the 78th session of the General Assembly, the resolution on the situation of human rights in North

Korea, submitted by the EU and co-sponsored by Japan, was adopted without a vote at a session of the Third Committee in November and a plenary session of the UN General Assembly in December (adopted for the 19th consecutive year). The resolution refers once again to the contents of previous resolutions, including the urgency and importance of the abductions issue, which involves a serious violation of human rights, and of the immediate return of all abductees, and also strongly demands that North Korea sincerely listen to the voices of the victims and their families, faithfully provide accurate, detailed and full information to their families on their fates and whereabouts, and engage in constructive dialogue with the parties concerned. At the same session, the UK, on behalf of 50 countries, delivered a joint statement concerning the serious human rights violations in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Japan was the only participating country from Asia.

In addition, Japan participated actively in discussions in the international community toward protecting and promoting human rights, including discussions on the human rights situations in countries such as Syria, Iran, and Myanmar, as well as on various human rights issues that include social development and the rights of the child.

C Implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) on Business and Human Rights

In response to the "Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)" endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council, Japan has been promoting respect for human rights in the context of business activities under the NAP on Business and Human Rights, formulated by the Government of Japan in 2020.

Moreover, in order to support efforts by business enterprises to respect human rights, the Government of Japan released the cross-industry guidelines on human rights due diligence⁵² in September 2022. In addition, a decision was made in April 2023 on the Government's policy in relation to consideration for human rights in public procurement. The G7 Hiroshima Leaders' Communiqué issued in May also emphasized the need to deepen discussions within and beyond the G7 on

⁵² Human rights due diligence: To identify, prevent, mitigate, and address, as well as to provide information on, the impact of corporate activities on human rights.

business and human rights. Furthermore, Japan also cooperates with international organizations, mainly in countries where Japanese enterprises are operating, to provide support to governments, and conduct training and seminars for Japanese companies and their suppliers. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will continue to steadily implement the NAP in cooperation with the relevant ministries and agencies, while continuing to engage in dialogues with the stakeholders.

(2) Initiatives Concerning International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

Japan has actively been engaged in efforts for strengthening the national implementation of IHL. In November, Japan participated in the North-East, South-East Asia and the Pacific Regional Conference on IHL. Furthermore, as it does every year, Japan dispatched judges to the IHL Moot Court and Role Play Competitions, organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), as part of dissemination of IHL. Japan held a meeting of the IHL National Committee in December.

(3) Contribution to Refugee Issues

From the perspective of international contribution and humanitarian aid, Japan accepted refugees from Myanmar who were temporarily residing in Thailand, under a resettlement program that ran from FY2010 to FY2014 (the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to a third country that agrees to accept them for long-term settlement). Since FY2015, Japan has been accepting refugees from Myanmar who had been residing temporarily in Malaysia.

Thereafter, in light of dramatic changes to the international situation surrounding refugees and trends in the international community, and from the perspective of better balancing the burden of the refugee problem among the international community, Japan made the decision in June 2019 to accept more refugees resettling from third countries, within the range of about 60 people per year.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic situation in Japan and abroad, the acceptance of refugees for FY2020 was postponed, but this was resumed in March 2022. A total of 101 households (276 people) came to Japan from FY2010 to the end of 2023.

Refugees arriving in Japan undergo a six-month training program, which includes language studies for daily life and employment support services. Those who have completed the training program live independently in their respective areas of resettlement. Initially, local governments in the Tokyo Metropolitan area played a central role in operations concerning the resettlement of refugees. However, from the perspective of promoting national understanding of the refugee issue, active efforts have been made to resettle refugees in municipalities outside the Tokyo Metropolitan area since 2018.

While the acceptance of resettled refugees has been done primarily by Western countries, Japan is the first country in Asia to accept resettled refugees.

8 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which has been ongoing since 2022, as well as the armed conflict in the Gaza Strip, triggered by terror attacks by Palestinian militant groups such as Hamas and others in October 2023, have seriously affected particularly women and girls, as represented by the increase in the number of reports on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). Furthermore, large-scale natural disasters such as typhoons, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and large fires, caused by climate change, are occurring frequently around the world regardless of the country, and there are growing anxieties about healthcare, food, and energy. These problems further highlight existing gender inequalities. For this reason, it is necessary to prioritize the realization of gender equality and the promotion of women's empowerment as one of the most important issues for peace and prosperity in Japan and the world. It is vital to focus on various policies and measures for women and girls in order to realize a more peaceful and prosperous society. Gender mainstreaming, which is to incorporate the gender perspective into all policies is becoming increasingly important in the international community. In particular, it is important to maintain the perspective of "Women, Peace and Security" (WPS), the foundational concept that the international community has a better chance to achieve sustainable peace by the equal and full participation of

women in all stages of decision-making leading up to post-conflict peacebuilding.

The Basic Policy on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform 2023, which serves as the basis for Japan's budget, covered WPS for the first time. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) established a task force under the Minister for Foreign Affairs in January 2024 to promote WPS across MOFA by using every available tool, including ODA. Japan will continue to contribute to the realization of gender equality including WPS, and the promotion of women's empowerment by hosting international conferences on women, vigorously supporting developing countries through development assistance as well as international cooperation with other countries and international organizations.

(1) G7

The G7 Leaders' Communiqué, which was issued at the G7 Hiroshima Summit held in May addressed gender as a major theme across three paragraphs, and also touched on gender in the preamble and within the broad context of development, food security, labor, education, digital, human rights, countering terrorism, and regional affairs. Among these, it is especially noteworthy that the document includes the leaders' commitment to the achievement of a society where all people can enjoy vibrant lives free from violence and discrimination, independent of gender identity or expression or sexual orientation, as well as their advocacy for creating a "nexus"⁵³ that bridges the political and security, economic and social spheres for maximizing the efficiency and the impact of actions, so as to deepen gender mainstreaming. The G7 Ministerial Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Nikko, Tochigi, held in Japan for the first time in June, was chaired by OGURA Masanobu, Minister in charge of Women's Empowerment and Minister of State for Gender Equality. The outcomes of the meeting were compiled in the Joint Statement of the G7 Gender Equality Ministers (Nikko Statement). At the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Tokyo in

November and chaired by Foreign Minister Kamikawa, the commitment to further build international solidarity beyond the G7 to address broader global challenges such as gender equality including the WPS agenda, was incorporated into the Foreign Ministers' Statement.

Mechanisms to monitor the G7's commitments in the area of gender were also implemented steadily, including the revision of the G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps,⁵⁴ and the publication of the first G7 Gender Equality Implementation Report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), among others.

(2) G20

In August, the third G20 Ministerial Conference on Women's Empowerment was convened in Gandhinagar (India) under India's G20 Presidency. The main theme of this meeting was "Women-led Inclusive Development as Cusp of Inter-Generational Transformation." Minister in charge of Women's Empowerment and Minister of State for Gender Equality Ogura participated in the session entitled "Skilling Opportunities for Women," where he spoke about the current status of gender equality in Japan and the relevant initiatives, the Nikko Statement compiled at the G7 Ministerial Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Nikko, Tochigi, and other related topics. The Leaders' Declaration issued at the G20 New Delhi Summit in September affirmed the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, strengthening economic and social empowerment, and closing the digital divide between genders.

(3) International Cooperation for the Empowerment of Women in Developing Countries

Through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and international organizations, Japan is engaged in educational support and human resource development, as well as efforts toward the economic empowerment of women and the elimination of gender-based violence in developing countries.

⁵³ NEXUS: Means "consistency," "connectivity," and "continuity."

⁵⁴ With an aim to continuously monitor G7 commitments, in June 2022, the G7 Elmau Summit endorsed the G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps, which selects 12 indicators from the areas of education, employment and social security, entrepreneurship, leadership, health and well-being, and funds for development cooperation, and maps the progress of gender equality in the G7 countries and EU.

A Educational Support and Human Resource Development

At the Global Education Summit held in July 2021, Foreign Minister Motegi announced in his video message that Japan will provide education support of more than 1.5 billion U.S. dollars over a five-year period, and support the provision of opportunities for quality education and human resource development to at least 7.5 million girls in developing countries. These efforts are now ongoing. At the 77th UN General Assembly convened in September 2022, Prime Minister Kishida declared that Japan will focus on human resource development and capacity building while putting the emphasis on “investment in people.” He also assumed the position of “Education Champion”⁵⁵ and stated that he will promote cooperation through human resource development based on the outcome of the UN Transforming Education Summit.

B Supporting Women Through JICA

To promote the economic empowerment of women, Japan has provided support to improve the livelihoods of low-income female home-based workers in Pakistan, and promoted the provision of financial services that meet the needs of women in Viet Nam. To promote peace and security for women, it also provides support to strengthen coordination as well as the capacity of organizations involved in addressing trafficking in persons in the Mekong region. Furthermore, in South Sudan and Pakistan, Japan has provided cooperation aimed at protecting the survivors of gender-based violence and supporting them to gain independence. Japan also conducted training with participants from 12 countries, on the theme of eradicating sexual and gender-based violence.

C Approach to Sexual Violence in Conflict

Sexual violence as tactics of war is a problem that cannot be overlooked. It is vital to put an end to impunity and to support victims. Japan has been actively working in this field to eliminate human rights violations against women in the 21st century. Japan prioritizes cooperation with international organizations such as the Office

of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC), and participation in discussions at international fora. In 2023, Japan provided financial support of approximately 0.9 million U.S. dollars to the OSRSG-SVC, providing medical and psychological support as well as support for socio-economic integration to victims of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, in Mali. In 2023, Japan contributed an additional 2 million Euros to the Global Survivors Fund (GSF), founded by 2018 Nobel Peace Prize laureates Dr. Denis Mukwege and Ms. Nadia Murad, bringing Japan’s total contributions to 8 million Euros by 2023 (as of December 31, 2023). As a member of the board, Japan is also actively involved in the management of this Fund. Furthermore, Japan continues to make voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund for Victims of the International Criminal Court (ICC), earmarking contributions for victims of sexual violence and putting efforts into protecting victims of such violence. In addition, Japan also provides support through UN Women.

(4) Initiatives in the UN**A Women, Peace and Security (WPS)**

Japan is strongly promoting WPS as one of its major diplomatic policies. WPS is an idea that the international community has a better chance to achieve sustainable peace by the equal and full participation of women in all stages of decision-making from the protection of women and girls in conflict, conflict prevention to peace processes and post-conflict peace-building. It was first stipulated in the UN Security Council resolution 1325 adopted in 2000.

Since assuming her position, Foreign Minister Kamikawa has taken various opportunities to communicate the importance of WPS, at both bilateral and multilateral meetings, including visits to New York during the UN High-Level Week, visits to Southeast Asia and the Middle East, as well as the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meetings. During the UN General Assembly High-Level Week in September, Foreign Minister Kamikawa attended the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Focal Point Network High-Level Side Event and the Women,

⁵⁵ At the same UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Kishida, at the request of UN Secretary-General António Guterres, assumed the position of the first “Education Champion,” fulfilling the role as a leader who promotes education in the international community.



Foreign Minister Kamikawa attending the WPS Focal Points Network High-Level Side Event (September 21, New York, U.S.)

Peace, and Leadership Symposium co-hosted by the International Peace Institute (IPI), the Government of Ireland, and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, and stated that Japan will make further efforts to promote WPS as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. During her visit to San Francisco in November for the APEC Ministerial Meeting, she delivered a keynote speech at the WPS+I (Women, Peace, and Security + Innovation) symposium, on the theme of innovation to elevate WPS to the next level. In her speech, Foreign Minister Kamikawa pointed out that men's engagement is essential for the promotion of WPS and the empowerment of women, and that it is critical to incorporate the WPS agenda in the areas of disaster response, prevention and mitigation with natural disasters occurring frequently around the world. She also pointed out that in the current era when peace and stability are wavering, we should discuss the economy, peace, and stability as inseparable issues, and engaged in innovative and creative discussions.

From the perspective that it is important to learn from the experts in various fields and on the ground in order for Japan to take WPS to the next level, Foreign Minister Kamikawa organized a dialogue session as the second "WPS + I" event, entitled "WPS + Innovation - from the field of humanitarian aid especially for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)." The session was moderated by Ms. SATO Mariko, Senior Regional Advisor for Asia and the Pacific, International Organization for Migration (IOM). Foreign Minister Kamikawa heard from representatives from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC),

the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and IOM, about the challenges they face and the role they expect from Japan, based on their experiences in the field of refugee and humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, Foreign Minister Kamikawa participated in an event organized by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation entitled "Female Foreign Ministers of Japan and Indonesia Talk ~Why do we need women's perspectives?" She emphasized the importance of women's perspectives in disaster response, and expressed that she would like to promote the WPS agenda together with Indonesia and other ASEAN countries on the occasion of the 50th year of Japan-ASEAN Friendship and Cooperation, and to spread the mainstreaming of WPS to the entire international community together with Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi.

In addition, Foreign Minister Kamikawa delivered video messages to the Symposium on "Engaging Men as Allies in Women, Peace and Security" hosted by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation in October, and the Reykjavik Global Forum 2023 hosted by Women Political Leaders (WPL), the Government of Iceland and the Parliament of Iceland in November. In her messages, she expressed her desire to further promote the WPS agenda.

In April, Japan formulated the Third Edition of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2023-2028) (an action plan toward implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and the related resolutions). In line with this Action Plan, in addition to contributing to WPS in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia mainly through contributions to international organizations such as UN Women and OSRSG-SVC, Japan has also prepared a report on the implementation status of monitoring and an evaluation report by an evaluation committee comprising external experts. The WPS Panel Discussion "How Japan can contribute to promoting women's participation in international peace and security" was held in Japan in December as a follow-up event of the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC) and World Assembly for Women (WAW!), and working-level and high-level discussions were held during this event (See the Special Feature on page 268).

B Cooperation with UN Women

Japan strengthened its cooperation with UN Women and increased its contribution from approximately 2 million U.S. dollars (2013) to 20.66 million U.S. dollars (2023). In particular, for women and girls in developing countries, Japan works on strengthening their capacity to participate in the peacebuilding and reconstruction processes, economic empowerment of women such as livelihood and entrepreneurship support, and support for women victims of gender-based violence. Japan also supports women's economic empowerment through providing daily necessities to women and girls who have been affected by conflict and natural disasters, and job creation and vocational training.

C United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

The CSW held its 67th session (CSW67) in March, and it was held as the first in-person meeting since CSW63 in 2019. The session hosted discussions on the priority theme of "Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls." Minister in charge of Women's Empowerment and Minister of State for Gender Equality Ogura explained Japan's initiatives toward women's empowerment in the digital sector (via recording) at the General Discussions. In the Ministerial Round Table, TANAKA Yumiko (Visiting Professor, Josai International University) spoke on behalf of Japan, introducing Japan's efforts to support women's employment in the digital sector, and to support improvement in digital skills for women overseas as a part of its international cooperation initiatives.

**SPECIAL
FEATURE****Toward Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
- the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC)
and World Assembly for Women:
WAW! Follow-up Week**

Women's empowerment has been included as an agenda item in the G7 Summit since 2015, and it is recognized as an important issue. The G7 Leaders' Communiqué, which was issued at the G7 Hiroshima Summit held in May, with Japan serving as the Presidency, addressed gender as a major theme across three paragraphs, and also touched on gender in the preamble and within the broad context of development, food security, labor, education, digital, human rights, countering terrorism, and regional affairs. In December, the Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC), an external advisory body to provide recommendations on gender equality to the G7 leaders, submitted its final report containing its recommendations to Prime Minister Kishida. Furthermore, since 2014, the Government of Japan has been holding World Assembly for Women: WAW! as a part of its efforts to realize gender equality and women's empowerment in Japan and overseas. From the viewpoint of following up on these efforts, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) held events on gender equality and women's empowerment in December.

● Courtesy Call to Prime Minister Kishida by GEAC

On December 12, Prime Minister Kishida received a courtesy call from representatives of GEAC, chaired by Dr. SHIRAHASE Sawako, Professor of the University of Tokyo. The eight GEAC members submitted their final report, "Gender Mainstreaming for an Inclusive, Peaceful, and Just Society," and expressed their strong expectation that Japan and other G7 members will further promote gender equality and women's empowerment through gender mainstreaming. In response, Prime Minister Kishida expressed his wish to continue to further advance gender mainstreaming.



Courtesy call to Prime Minister Kishida by GEAC (December 12, Tokyo. Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

● **G7 Hiroshima Summit Follow-up event: Symposium on GEAC Report 2023 - Toward Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**

The “G7 Hiroshima Summit Follow-up event: Symposium on GEAC Report 2023 - Toward Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment” was held on December 13. GEAC members discussed the contents of the recently published final report from the perspectives of experts in various fields with knowledge of gender issues. In her video message, Foreign Minister Kamikawa stated that the recommendations in the final report are consistent with the stance of the G7, and welcomed that ensuring the full implementation of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) is included in the recommendations.



Video message from Foreign Minister Kamikawa in the Symposium on GEAC Report 2023 (December 13, Tokyo)

● **Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Panel Discussion: “How Japan can contribute to promoting women's participation in international peace and security” - G7 GEAC and WAW! Follow-up event**

On the same day, a panel discussion on WPS was held on the theme “How Japan can contribute to promoting women's participation in international peace and security.” The first part began with an introduction by MOFA of the features of Japan's WPS Action Plan and WPS initiatives unique to Japan, followed by reports based on experiences related to WPS on the frontlines from the Ministry of Defense, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and NGO representatives, among others. In the second part, speakers including Melanne Verwee, Executive Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security; MEGURO Yoriko, Professor Emeritus of Sophia University; Maxime Houinato, Regional Director for UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office; and Peter Roberts OAM, Minister and Deputy Head of Mission of the Australian Embassy in Japan, participated in a lively discussion on conflict and disaster response in light of the WPS agenda. In addition, Executive Director Verwee held an informal talk with Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs FUKAZAWA Yoichi, during which they exchanged views on Japan's WPS initiatives and other topics.



WPS Panel Discussion (December 13, Tokyo)



Lunch meeting between Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa and Executive Director Verwee of the Georgetown Institute for WPS (December 14, Tokyo)

2

Japan's International Cooperation (Development Cooperation and Response to Global Issues)

As the international community faces compound crises, including Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the situation in the Middle East, and global issues, where the presence of developing and emerging countries, also known as the Global South, increased, the realization of a world in which "human dignity" is protected has become an even greater challenge to achieve. In this manner, 2023 was a year in which the importance of Japan's development cooperation was reaffirmed as a way to address these issues.

1 Development Cooperation

(1) Development Cooperation Charter and Japan's ODA Allocation

A Revision of the Development Cooperation Charter

In June, the Cabinet decided on the revision of Development Cooperation Charter, showing a new direction for the country's development cooperation (See the Special Feature on page 271). The reason behind the revision, which marked the first in eight years following 1992, 2003, and 2015, includes that the international community finds itself at a major turning point in history. In other words, the international community is facing compound crises (namely; (1) increasingly serious global issues, such as climate change and infectious diseases, and delay in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), (2) serious challenges to the existing international order and the deepening risk

of division, including in supply chains, and (3) the impact on the economies of developing countries and the occurrence of humanitarian crises linked to these crises). The role of development cooperation is becoming increasingly vital in overcoming these crises.

In addition, there is a growing need for development cooperation based on transparent and fair rules in the international community as a whole, given that the debt problem faced by some developing countries has become more serious. At the same time, as the inflow of private-sector financing to developing countries has greatly surpassed public sector funds, including Official Development Assistance (ODA),¹ there is an increasing need to maximize the effects of development through collaboration with various actors, including private sector companies and international organizations, and through the mobilization of new funds.

Against this background, Japan revised its Development Cooperation Charter to present a new direction for the country's development cooperation. Under the new Charter, Japan will further strengthen its engagement with developing countries and make more effective and strategic use of development cooperation as one of the most important tools of its diplomacy.

B Japan's ODA Allocation

In 2022, Japan provided approximately 17.50 billion U.S. dollars (-0.8% year on year) in ODA,² based on the grant equivalent system (GE system).³ Japan ranks third among the member states of the OECD/DAC,⁴ following the U.S. and Germany. The ODA/

¹ ODA : Official Development Assistance

Public funds to promote development cooperation, the main purpose of which is to help improve the economic development and welfare of developing countries.

https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/page_000017.html

² The main modalities of ODA from Japan are: grants including grant aid, debt relief, grants through multilateral institutions and technical cooperation, government loans, and contributions and subscriptions to multilateral institution.

³ Grant Equivalent System (GE system) was introduced by the OECD/DAC in 2018 as the standard method for calculating ODA loans. The grant equivalent of government loans, is calculated as ODA flows. The GE system records the amount of government loans by applying the terms of the loan, such as the amount of loan provided, interest rate and repayment period, to a formula. The more concessional the terms of the loan are, the larger the grant equivalent is. Compared to the net flow system (the full amount of loan is recorded, on the other hand, the amount repaid is counted as negative) that was the standard method used by the OECD/DAC, the GE system measures Japan's actual government loans more accurately.

⁴ OECD/DAC : Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee

1



New Development Cooperation Charter

In June, the Cabinet approved the revised “Development Cooperation Charter,” which sets a new direction for Japan’s development cooperation. The main points of the revision are as follows:

(1) Revision of basic policies

The guiding principle is “human security” in the new era, and Japan focuses on “investment in people,” through protection and empowerment of individuals, and has defined the “solidarity” among various actors as one of the pillars, so that each person can live with happiness and dignity.

In addition, Japan has newly adopted the concept of “co-creation,” involving various entities, with developing countries at the core, to jointly create new solutions and social values. Japan also aims to bring back home such values generated in this way and solve its own economic and social issues and to promote economic growth by nurturing the next generation of human resources in both Japan and developing countries.

(2) Three priority policies

First, “quality growth” is becoming increasingly important in this era with compound crises. Accordingly, Japan is providing cooperation to secure the foundation and driving force for economic growth. Japan will also strengthen its efforts to address the challenges that developing countries face today, such as strengthening economic and social autonomy and resilience, including food and energy security, as well as new challenges such as digital transformation.

Second, Japan will endeavor to contribute to the social stability of developing countries, which is a prerequisite for “quality growth,” by supporting the development of legal systems, achieving good governance, providing humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding, and strengthening maritime security capacity. Under the vision of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP),” Japan will also work with developing countries to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

Third, Japan will address global issues that are closely related to “quality growth.” Global issues such as climate change have a particularly serious impact on vulnerable developing countries. In light of the slow progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Japan will accelerate its efforts, especially in the areas of climate change (improving the response capacity of developing countries for mitigation and adaptation), the environment, health (promoting universal health coverage (UHC)), disaster prevention, and education.

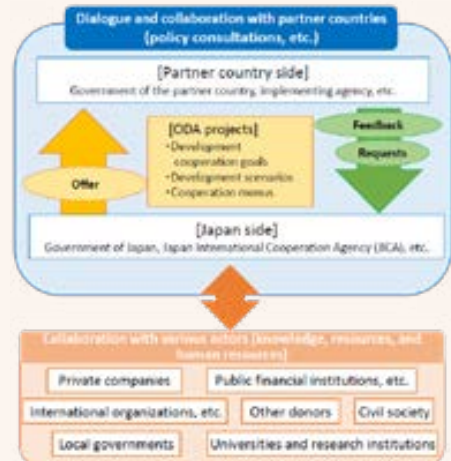
(3) Implementation: three approaches to evolve the implementation of ODA

The first is to maximize development effects through “co-creation” with various actors. Japan has shown its commitment to enhance solidarity with various partners, including private companies, public financial institutions, other donors (countries that share the same objectives and principles of development cooperation), and international organizations and Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs). Through the strategic use of public funds, including ODA for private finance mobilization and JICA’s private-sector investment finance, Japan will support sustainable finance, such as impact investment,¹ and work to improve the business environment in developing countries, including human resource development and support for legal system development.

Second, Japan will strengthen its strategic approach through measures such as Co-creation for Common Agenda Initiative. Co-creation for Common Agenda Initiative is a type of cooperation in which Japan proactively proposes an attractive cooperation menu that leverages Japan’s strengths, and formulates projects through dialogue and collaboration with the partner country. By choosing and announcing areas to be strategically addressed in light of Japan’s foreign policy, Japan will increase predictability and encourage the participation of various entities in projects.

Third, Japan will improve its ODA system. With “flexibility and efficiency” and “rapidity” as keywords, Japan will

work constantly to improve the system in response to the times by proposing comprehensive cooperation packages, strengthening involvement in countries with relatively high-income levels through the use of grants and technical assistance, speeding up decision-making in line with the private sector, and improving means of providing emergency humanitarian assistance.



Reference: Diagram of Co-creation for Common Agenda Initiative

¹ Investments that aim to not only secure investment returns but also to consider social issues and contribute to the benefit of the entire economy and society, with intention of creating environmental and social effects ("impact") (Source: Financial Services Agency website compiled based on <https://www.fsa.go.jp/en/news/2022/20221025.html>)

GNI⁵ ratio based on the GE system was 0.39%, placing Japan in 16th place among member states of the OECD/DAC (Source: OECD Database (OECD.Stat) (December 2023)).

(2) Development Cooperation in 2023

In 2023, Japan engaged mainly in the following (A to D below).

A Support for Ukraine and the Global South as well as Response to Humanitarian Crises

To date, Japan has announced and steadily has been providing Ukraine and relevant surrounding countries with assistance totaling 7.6 billion U.S. dollars covering the fields of humanitarian assistance, finance, food, and recovery and reconstruction areas. From the early days of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Japan has quickly implemented humanitarian assistance for Ukrainian displaced persons including in the areas of medical and health, water and sanitation, shelters, food, and protection of women and children, in addition to financial assistance. In response to the destruction of many energy facilities and widespread power outages in various parts of the country due to Russian attacks,

Japan provided two large autotransformers which will benefit 500,000 residents in Kyiv in September regarding winterization assistance through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In countries of the Global South, including African nations, food insecurity and shortages have been exacerbated by rising inflation and supply chain disruptions caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine, further worsening humanitarian crises there. In response to the resulting global food security issues, Japan is providing food assistance and support to increase food production capacity through bilateral arrangements, international institutions, and NGOs in Japan.

The situation in Palestine and the Gaza Strip is becoming more serious. Japan provided humanitarian assistance totaling approximately 75 million U.S. dollars⁶ to Palestine, as well as in-kind assistance, such as tents and medical consumables through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Amid the worsening humanitarian situation around the world, the Second Global Refugee Forum (GRF) was held in Geneva in December, with Foreign Minister Kamikawa attending from Japan, which served as one of the co-conveners. Minister Kamikawa stated that

⁵ GNI : Gross National Income

⁶ On January 28, 2024, Japan suspended its financial contribution (35 million U.S. dollars) to UNRWA as part of its support for Palestine, following the alleged involvement of UNRWA staff in terrorism that was uncovered on January 26, 2024.

Japan hopes for a future where the dreams of each and every refugee and displaced person can be realized. Noting that the concept of Women, Peace and Security (WPS)⁷ is essential when considering solutions for refugees and displaced persons, she called for strengthening the unity and cooperation of the international community to halt the worsening of the humanitarian situation. In addition, Minister Kamikawa talked about Japan launching the “Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus”⁸ as a multi-stakeholder pledge as a platform for collaboration among donor countries, host countries, international organizations, and others. She explained that the efforts of HDP Nexus are expanding in Africa.

B Achievement of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)

Japan is promoting concrete initiatives utilizing ODA strategically in order to achieve a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” together with the broad range of partners in the international community who share this vision and the Indo-Pacific region, which is a focal point of the world’s vitality.

Japan has been developing “quality infrastructure” to strengthen regional connectivity, supporting the development of legal systems, strengthening capacity building in the areas of debt management and macroeconomic policy, and extending capacity building assistance to maritime law enforcement agencies to ensure maritime security (provision of equipment such as patrol vessels and coastal monitoring radars, human resource development, etc.), and will continue to promote these efforts.

In particular, the development of quality infrastructure represents an important foundation for the realization of FOIP.

From this standpoint, it is important to continue to disseminate and implement the G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment, endorsed at the G20 Osaka Summit of 2019 as an international standard, including such principles as openness, transparency,

economic efficiency in view of life-cycle costs, and debt sustainability.

In its new plan for FOIP, announced in March 2023, Japan will redouble efforts to achieve FOIP, mobilizing more than 75 billion U.S. dollars, representing a total of both private and public infrastructure spending, to grow the Indo-Pacific region by 2030 with other countries.

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May 2023, a side event was held jointly by Japan, the U.S., and the European Commission, with the participation of the private sector, on the Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII), an initiative to promote quality infrastructure investment launched at the G7 Elmau Summit in June 2022. At the side event, the G7 expressed their intention to mobilize private capital for infrastructure investment in developing countries, in collaboration with a wide range of actors.

C Addressing Global Issues

Japan’s revised Development Cooperation Charter, approved by the Cabinet Office in June, lays out the idea of advancing human security in a new era as its guiding philosophy, and the country is now moving ahead with initiatives to resolve global issues, including achieving the SDGs. Japan will continue to proactively advocate “human-centered international cooperation” in the areas of health, food, nutrition, gender, education, disaster risk reduction, water and sanitation, climate change and environmental issues, including humanitarian assistance. In doing so, Japan will promote visible development cooperation while utilizing collaboration with Japanese NGOs working on international cooperation. Moreover, as humanitarian crises become more protracted and diverse, in addition to humanity and development, Japan will promote humanitarian assistance, including assistance for refugees and displaced persons, poverty reduction, economic and social development, and peacebuilding and nation-building, based on the philosophy of the HDP Nexus, which is redoubling efforts to address the

⁷ Women, Peace and Security (WPS) : An approach in which amidst protecting women, women themselves can help move closer to a more sustainable peace by taking leadership positions and participating in conflict prevention, reconstruction, and peace building. In 2000, for the first time in its history, the UN Security Council passed Security Council Resolution 1325 on WPS, which clearly states that international peace and conflict prevention and resolution require the equal participation of women, protection against sexual violence during conflicts, and gender equality.

⁸ Humanitarian, Development, and Peace Nexus: An approach, whereby, in parallel with humanitarian assistance, development cooperation is provided to support the self-reliance of refugees and reduce the burden on host countries, and peace efforts are promoted to resolve and prevent conflicts that are the root causes.

root causes of conflict and provide assistance for maintaining peace.

D Diplomatic Efforts in Support of Japan's Economy

Japan seeks to revitalize its own economy through the development of developing countries and Japan is promoting initiatives for achieving the growth of both.

Specifically, in the future, Japan will promote public-private collaboration, including the co-creation for common agenda initiative in development cooperation, which proposes an attractive cooperation menu to implement development cooperation, and ODA that mobilizes funds from the private sector, as laid out in the new Development Cooperation Charter. In order to have Japan's leading technologies utilized for development in developing countries, Japan will promote the acquisition of business rights and operation rights of Japanese corporations through means such as the provision of grant aid for public projects implemented through public-private partnership and furthermore, offer technical cooperation that contributes to quality infrastructure investment, such as trade facilitation and securing debt sustainability. Additionally, to encourage the overseas expansion of private companies including Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and local governments, Japan will increase the visibility of products and equipment that can help resolve issues in developing countries through JICA's private sector partnership in conducting surveys and verification on business models as well as continuously generate demand for these. Through human resource development, Japan will also contribute to advancing the improvement of the business environment, thereby promoting investment and overseas expansion by corporations.

(3) Safety Measures for People Engaged in International Cooperation Projects

Ensuring the safety of people engaged in international cooperation projects against risks such as worsening security conditions due to political instability and natural disasters around the world is essential to the appropriate implementation of development cooperation.

Following the terrorist attack in Dhaka, Bangladesh

in July 2016, the "Final Report" was released as the outcome of the review by the Council on Safety Measures for International Cooperation Projects (August 2016). Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and JICA make efforts to implement the safety measures mentioned in the Final Report, continue and enhance actions to ensure the effectiveness of safety measures for people engaged in international cooperation projects.

(4) Initiatives in Major Regions

A East and Southeast Asia

The achievement of peace, stability, and prosperity in the East and Southeast Asia regions are important to Japan, which has a close relationship with these regions. Through development cooperation, Japan has helped these regions to resolve various development issues including poverty reduction, by promoting economic growth and human security and contributed to the development of these regions.

Above all, as member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are keys to achieving FOIP, Japan provides support toward efforts aimed at overcoming issues faced by ASEAN and further promoting integration. Based on the fact that it was confirmed that the principles of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and FOIP match one another at the Japan-ASEAN summit Meeting held in 2020, Japan plans to continue strengthening Japan-ASEAN cooperation going forward in terms of maritime cooperation, connectivity, the SDGs and economy, which are priority fields of the AOIP. In 2023, the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, the Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative was announced to further promote efforts to strengthen connectivity in both structural and non-structural. As a result, Japan pledged to strengthen multi-layered connectivity in a wide range of areas, including transport infrastructure development, digital connectivity, maritime cooperation, supply chains, electricity connectivity, as well as human and knowledge connectivity, and to provide capacity building projects for 5,000 individuals over the next three years through technical cooperation. At the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation held in December, the leaders also announced new efforts in public-private partnership



Indonesia “the Economic and Social Development Programme (Provision of Fishery Monitoring Vessels)” (September, Indonesia; Photo: JICA)



Arresting technique course training for the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency by JICA and the Japan Coast Guard (October, Malaysia; Photo: JICA)

for finding solutions through co-creation, aiming to mobilize 35 billion U.S. dollars in private and public funds over the next five years in the ASEAN region by boosting private investment for strengthening connectivity, climate change measures, and support for MSME and startups.

Since there is a large number of Japanese companies doing business and a large resident population of Japanese nationals in the East and Southeast Asian regions, Japan has provided intensive support against COVID-19 in the region, including donations of health- and medical-related equipment and improving health and medical systems through technical cooperation. To date, Japan has provided a total of around 400 billion Japanese yen to Mongolia and Southeast Asian countries based on the economic impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of its COVID-19 support measures provided within the ASEAN region, Japan continues to support the operations of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases.

Japan is actively providing support for capacity

building for maritime law enforcement to countries positioned along Japan's sea lanes such as the Philippines and Viet Nam, with the aim of building a free and open international order. Such efforts include providing equipment such as patrol vessels and coastal monitoring radars, as well as human resource development through the dispatch of experts. Furthermore, Japan is providing consistent support to eradicate domestic and regional disparity, and support for the creation of a sustainable society in areas such as disaster risk reduction, environment and climate change, and energy. In 2019, Japan signed the ASEAN-Japan Technical Cooperation Agreement (TCA) and has been providing technical cooperation to the ASEAN Community based on the Agreement. In 2023, Japan provided training on public international law, criminal justice, local industry development, and strengthening local health systems. Japan has also provided cooperation to the Mekong region through the framework of the Japan-Mekong Cooperation, and will continue to contribute to the development of the Mekong countries.

With regards to Myanmar, in response to the worsened humanitarian situation following the coup d'état in February 2021, Japan has been providing humanitarian assistance that directly benefits the population of Myanmar (food, medical supplies, etc.) through international organizations and NGOs.

B Southwest Asia

Southwest Asia holds strategic importance as a marine transportation hub that connects East Asia with the Middle East, and is also a region with immense economic potential, such as India, where economic growth and massive infrastructure demand are anticipated in the future. On the other hand, the region still faces many unresolved challenges such as undeveloped infrastructure, poverty and natural disasters. Japan provides a range of assistance through ODA to assist the region in overcoming these challenges, bearing in mind the improvement of the investment environment for Japanese companies and advancement of human security.

Japan has been providing support to India, which has a massive population, for the construction of high-speed railways, subways in a number of cities, and sea-crossing roads to support the development of

economic and social infrastructure including transportation that contributes to enhancing connectivity and strengthening industrial competitiveness, to realize FOIP. In addition, Japan has supported India's sustainable and inclusive growth by providing the Government of India with assistance for its initiatives to achieve the SDGs, and through such projects as those in the forestry sector including afforestation activities, those in the agricultural sector including aqueduct upkeep and farm operation support, as well as through those in the health sector that help strengthen the medical system. With regard to Bangladesh, under the Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (BIG-B) initiative and the "Development of an Industrial Value Chain connecting the Bay of Bengal and North Eastern Region of India" concept, based on the new plan for FOIP, Japan is providing support which contributes to economic growth, such as for strengthening domestic and regional multi-layered connectivity, developing infrastructure, and improving the investment environment. Japan has decided to provide an Emergency Budget Support Japanese ODA Loan to the Government of Bangladesh, which is seeking to improve its expenditure management amid soaring transportation, food, and energy prices due to the situation in Ukraine and other factors, in order to support its fiscal management reforms. In addition, Japan provided Bangladesh with humanitarian assistance of approximately 3.5 billion Japanese yen in the areas of food aid, shelter renovation, water and sanitation, protection, education, and livelihood improvement for displaced persons from Rakhine State, Myanmar, who continue to face serious food insecurity and other problems. Japan also decided

to provide approximately 2.25 billion Japanese yen in livelihood improvement assistance to the surrounding communities that are hosting the displaced persons.

Japan provided assistance totaling 5 billion Japanese yen for Sri Lanka, which has seen the humanitarian situation deteriorate caused by economic crisis after it declared it would stop some payments on external debt in April 2022, to maintain health and medical services and ensure their stable delivery. In addition, Japan decided to support the improvement of infectious waste management (503 million Japanese yen), stabilization of electricity supply at hospitals using renewable energy (1.23 billion yen), and improvement of the livelihoods of fishermen, women, and others in poor and vulnerable areas such as northern provinces. With regards to Pakistan, Japan announced that it will provide Pakistan with aid of 77 million U.S. dollars in 2023 and beyond for such areas as disaster risk reduction, health, and agriculture as additional assistance once domestic procedures are completed at the meeting of donors held in Geneva in January in response to the floods that struck the country. As part of this, Japan decided to extend funding (794 million Japanese yen) to nine girls' elementary schools damaged in the flooding for repair work.

C Pacific Island Countries

The Pacific Island countries are not only Japan's "neighbors," connected by the Pacific, but also have deep historical connections with Japan. Moreover, as these countries possess a vast exclusive economic zone (EEZ, areas where a country's economic right reaches), they are a key region for maritime transportation for Japan, and also provide vital fishing grounds for Japan's distant-water bonito and tuna fisheries. Therefore, the stability and prosperity of the Pacific Island countries are of great importance to Japan.

The Pacific Island countries share common issues that are unique to small island states, such as smaller economies, territories that are scattered over a wide ocean area, difficulty in breaking into the international market, and vulnerability to damages from natural disasters. In light of these circumstances, Japan, as a partner of the Pacific Island countries, is providing support to boost their autonomous and sustainable development.



Newborn baby room at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, newly established with Japan's support (October, Islamabad, Pakistan)



Tilapia aquaculture training (practical training on fry management) in a Pacific Island country for SDG 14 “Life below water” project (January, Fiji; Photo: JICA)



Mangrove water quality survey for the “Project for Enhancement of Integrated Management of Coastal Ecosystem for Strengthening their Resilience Climate Change” in Palau (April, Palau; Photo: JICA)

In particular, based on the five priority areas announced at the Ninth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM9) held in July 2021, namely, (1) COVID-19 Response and Recovery, (2) Sustainable Oceans based on the Rule of Law, (3) Climate Change and Disaster Resilience, (4) Strengthening Foundations for Sustainable and Resilient Economic Development, and (5) People-to-People Exchanges and Human Resource Development, Japan is helping strengthen health and medical systems by providing medical containers as COVID-19 countermeasures. Japan is also providing maritime security related equipment for keeping sustainable oceans based on the rule of law in Oceania with its expansive EEZ and assistance for upgrading power transmission systems to promote the introduction of renewable energy.

Furthermore, in June 2022, Japan joined Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP),⁹ launched as an initiative to coordinate the approaches of various countries for providing more effective and efficient assistance to Pacific Island countries. Together with Australia, New Zealand, the UK, the U.S., Germany, Canada and others, Japan has confirmed the need to strengthen partnerships and commitments with the Pacific Islands region. In particular, Japan intends to support regional initiatives led by Pacific Island countries on climate change and other issues.

D Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean is a region with which Japan has enjoyed friendly relations for a long time. The region also has deep historical ties with Japan, as demonstrated by the fact that around 3.1 million Japanese descendants, known as “Nikkei,” reside in the region. The region is a major supplier of resources and food, as well as a potential emerging market with gross regional production of around 6.25 trillion U.S. dollars. On the other hand, the region has large demand for development in regard to common issues faced by the international community, such as disaster risk reduction associated with climate change, vulnerabilities in health and medicine, and poverty. Japan is engaged in various cooperative efforts while also taking into account the development circumstances of each country.

In 2023, in the area of health and medical care, the Government of Japan decided to provide Bolivia with a yen loan of up to 15 billion Japanese yen to support the continuation and expansion of public services related to the health and medical care and institutional improvements to protect vulnerable groups. In the area of assistance for natural disasters, Japan provided emergency relief supplies to Chile for wildfire damage through JICA.

In the climate change/environment sector, the Government of Japan decided to provide grant assistance to Saint Christopher and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados in 2022 in cooperation with the UNDP

⁹ See the MOFA website for ‘The Partners in the Blue Pacific Ministerial Meeting on Cooperation with Pacific Island Countries: https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/ocn/shin4e_000049.html





Disaster risk reduction work to prevent slope collapse and mudslides along the road under the “The Project for Road Disaster Prevention of National Road No. 7” grant aid for Bolivia (June, Santa Cruz Department, Bolivia)

for the removal of Sargassum seaweed, amounting to approximately 1.4 billion Japanese yen. Furthermore, Japan decided to provide the Dominican Republic with 200 million Japanese yen of equipment and materials from Japanese companies in 2023 to help the country deal with the problem. As part of its civilian assistance to Venezuelans, including displaced persons, the Government of Japan provided 350 million Japanese yen through the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to provide humanitarian assistance, including protection activities and shelter construction, to the most vulnerable groups in the country, such as women and youth. Japan is also providing assistance to strengthen access to information as well as support local communities and humanitarian aid organizations. As part of the measures against irregular migration, JICA signed a partnership agreement with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Guatemala in 2023 to address irregular migration based on Japan-U.S. collaboration.

Due to the deteriorating security situation in Haiti, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution authorizing the deployment of the Multinational Security Support Mission to Haiti. In order to contribute to the stability in the country, Japan decided to contribute approximately 2 billion Japanese yen to support capacity building of the Haitian National Police, as well as approximately 3 million U.S. dollars for emergency grant aid to combat cholera and 200 million Japanese yen for food assistance (grant aid).

Japan also has entered into partnership programs with Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and Chile to promote

human resources development in Latin America and the Caribbean through triangular cooperation¹⁰ in areas such as SME support, disaster risk reduction, and policing systems.

E Central Asia and the Caucasus

The Central Asia and Caucasus region is surrounded by Russia, Asia, and Europe. Given its geopolitical importance and transportation routes connecting East Asia and Europe, the development and stability and of this region are also important for the development, stability, and connectivity of the whole Eurasia, including Japan. As a partner that supports nations of Central Asia and the Caucasus region to maintain and strengthen free and open international order based on the rule of law, Japan announced its commitment to support on the basis of a new development model with an emphasis on “investment in people” and “quality of growth” for sustainable development in Central Asia at the 9th Foreign Ministers’ Meeting of the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue held in December 2022.

In the area of “investment in people,” the Government of Japan develops human resources by accepting young administrative officials who are expected to become leaders in the future as study abroad students at Japanese graduate schools and play active roles in policy planning and implementation after returning to their home countries through the grant aid Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS). As assistance focusing on “quality



Opening ceremony of the grant aid project “The Project for the Rehabilitation of Kizilkala-Bokhtar Section of Dushanbe-Bokhtar Road” in Tajikistan attended by JICA President Tanaka and Minister of Transport and Communications of Tajikistan Ibrahim (September 1, Khatlon Region, Tajikistan; Photo: JICA)

¹⁰ Triangular Cooperation: Support by developed countries for developing countries to cooperate with other developing countries by utilizing human resources, technology, funds, knowledge, etc.

of growth,” the repairs and lane widening of major roads by grant aid has improved safety and facilitated logistics in Tajikistan.

In addition, Japan is providing support for enhancing border control capabilities in the Central Asian region, bordering on Afghanistan.

F The Middle East and North Africa

Securing peace and stability in the Middle East and North Africa regions, which are geopolitical keys in that they are the crossroads of Europe, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, is crucial not only for the energy security of Japan but also for the stability of the world. From this point of view, Japan is providing support to achieve peace and stability in the region.

With regard to Syria, where civil war has been prolonged, Japan has provided more than 3.5 billion U.S. dollars to Syria and surrounding countries since 2012 under its policy of providing humanitarian assistance to all Syrians facing difficulties. Furthermore, in order to foster human resources who could contribute to Syria's future reconstruction, 136 Syrian students have been accepted in Japan since 2017.

In Yemen, where a severe humanitarian crisis is still ongoing, Japan has provided more than 400 million U.S. dollars in support since 2015. At the High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen held in February, Minister for Foreign Affairs Hayashi stated that Japan will continue to offer support toward peace and stability in Yemen. Additionally, in 2023, through partnerships with international organizations, in addition to humanitarian assistance in particularly high demand areas of food, education, and refugee assistance, Japan provided cooperation in repairing roads connecting the Port of Aden and in human resource development through JICA training from a medium- to long-term perspective.

Afghanistan is facing a serious humanitarian crisis since the Taliban took over Kabul in August 2021. Given this situation, Japan has been providing humanitarian support in areas such as health care, education, and food, including support for basic humanitarian needs, through collaboration with international



Foreign Minister Hayashi participates in a high-level pledging meeting on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen (online) (February 27, Tokyo)

organizations. In response to the earthquake damage suffered in western Afghanistan in October 2023, in addition to the provision of emergency relief supplies such as blankets through JICA, the Government of Japan provided 3 million U.S. dollars in emergency grant assistance in the areas of food and health through international organizations, while providing approximately 1.46 million U.S. dollars in assistance by Japanese NGOs to disaster victims through the Japan Platform (JPF).¹¹

Human development is vital to realize stability in the Middle East in the mid- to long-term. As one example, Japan is also providing support in terms of future human resources development through provision of Japanese-style education via the Egypt Japanese School (EJS) and Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology (E-JUST).

In April, Prime Minister Kishida visited Egypt and held a summit meeting with President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi, where they held a signing ceremony for exchanges of notes on the provision of a 100 billion Japanese yen loan for the first phase of the Cairo Metro Line No.4 Phase 1 Project (III). They also confirmed the steady progress of Japan's assistance through ODA, including cooperation on strengthening food security and the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) (See the Column on page 177).

Immediately after the earthquake that struck southeastern Türkiye in February, Japan provided emergency relief supplies to Türkiye and Syria through JICA and dispatched Japan Disaster Relief teams, including rescue, medical and expert teams, to Türkiye for emergency relief activities (See the Column on page

¹¹ JPF : Japan Platform, or JPE, is an NGO established in August 2000 (NGO status obtained in May 2001). It was established jointly among NGOs, business and the Government of Japan with the purpose of providing prompt and effective emergency humanitarian assistance activities by a Japanese NGO in response to natural disasters and refugee situations outside of Japan.

280). In addition, for the first time, Japan transported equipment and materials for the medical team by SDF aircraft and disaster relief supplies from Pakistan to Türkiye as part of an operation coordinated and cooperated with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In addition, emergency humanitarian assistance was provided through international organizations and Japanese NGOs via JPF. Furthermore, during the Japan-Türkiye Summit telephone call in July, Prime Minister Kishida announced new support measures for recovery and reconstruction, including grant aid totaling 5 billion Japanese yen to help with

debris removal and the provision of medical equipment and heavy machinery, as well as an 80 billion Japanese yen loan to support recovery and reconstruction in the affected areas. In conjunction with this financial assistance, Prime Minister Kishida expressed his intention to provide technical cooperation that makes use of Japan's expertise, including assistance in the formulation of reconstruction plans, technical assistance for earthquake-resistant reinforcement of public buildings, and assistance in strengthening disaster waste management capacity, including debris disposal.

COLUMN

A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed: a Century of Cooperation between Japan and Türkiye

A major earthquake with its epicenter in southeastern Türkiye occurred on February 6, 2023. On the day of the earthquake, at the request of the Government of Türkiye, Japan dispatched Japan Disaster Relief (JDR) teams consisting of 74 personnel from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), National Police Agency, Fire and Disaster Management Agency, Japan Coast Guard, and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and private sector personnel (including structural assessment specialists and medical personnel) to conduct search and rescue activities.

Starting February 10, JDR medical teams totaling 181 personnel were dispatched in three squads, which consisted of 75 members in the first squad, 65 in the second squad, and 41 in the third squad. The squads were comprised of MOFA officials, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, engineers, logistics support personnel (support staff to facilitate the teams such as providing accommodation and transportation arrangements), JICA task coordinators, and other personnel. The medical team provided medical care for over 24 days between February 16 and March 11 at a field hospital set up in Ozeri District, Gaziantep Province, located in southeastern Türkiye, which had a high medical need. Afterwards, a team of experts consisting of specialists in construction, seismic isolation, and earthquake resistant technology (representing the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, private consultants, JICA, etc.) was also dispatched.

When one thinks of medical assistance in the aftermath of a disaster, the first thing that may come to mind is the treatment of people rescued from collapsed buildings. However, we must also consider the fact that since local hospitals have been affected by the disaster and rendered dysfunctional, they are no longer able to provide the same medical services as before to the public.

In light of this situation, Japan dispatched a "Type 2" Emergency Medical Team authorized by the World Health Organization (WHO) for the first time ever. This team carried out surgical and inpatient care functions, providing a total of approximately 2,000 treatments (including 17 inpatient care, 49 surgeries, 361 X-rays, etc.) on a 24-hour basis.

The high level of professionalism, morale, and thoughtful treatment of the medical team members has garnered gratitude from both patients and the local community. Although the team had to work under severe weather conditions with temperatures below freezing at the beginning of the dispatch, the entire medical team was encouraged by the words and appreciation of the Turkish people, some of whom said, "We feel safe when we receive medical treatment from Japanese doctors," and "We trust Japan."



The medical team treating the injured
(Photo: JICA)

Türkiye is known as a friendly country to Japan. Both countries have strengthened their friendly relationship over the years, which owes to a long history of reaching out to each other in the aftermath of earthquakes such as the recent one. Türkiye, like Japan, is an earthquake-prone country. When a major earthquake hit northwestern Türkiye in 1999, Japan provided assistance to victims of the disaster by dispatching international emergency aid teams and constructing temporary housing sites known as the “Japan Village.” Again, after the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, the Government of Türkiye dispatched a rescue team of 32 people to Miyagi Prefecture, where they worked for about three weeks and provided various additional assistance. The three-week deployment of the rescue team was the longest of any aid and rescue team dispatched from any country or region. In addition to the earthquake disaster, Türkiye also dispatched Turkish aircraft to help Japanese nationals in Tehran leave the country during the Iran-Iraq war.

The year 2024 marks the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Türkiye. The relationship between the two countries has developed in a manner that truly embodies the proverb, “A friend in need is a friend indeed.” Japan hopes that its relationship with Türkiye will be further enhanced over the next 100 years given this foundation of friendship.



Medical team examination
(Photo: JICA)



Field hospital constructed by the team
(Photo: JICA)

G Africa

Africa has a population of approximately 1.4 billion people in 54 countries, and continues to attract attention and anticipation from the international community for its high potential in becoming the driving force for the world's growth, backed by its abundant natural resources. On the other hand, it also faces various challenges such as poverty, a vulnerable healthcare system, and the rise of terrorism and violent extremism. Given this background, Japan has been contributing for the development in Africa over the years through assistance provided via bilateral and international organizations and frameworks such as the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD).

In April, armed clashes in Sudan caused a humanitarian crisis domestically and in neighboring countries. Security has deteriorated in many areas of the country and more than 6 million people have been displaced, both domestically and abroad. In response, Japan provided emergency grant aid through international organizations and assistance to displaced persons through NGOs via JPF to provide humanitarian assistance in Sudan.

In May, Prime Minister Kishida also announced during his visit to Ghana that Japan would provide assistance with the aim of contributing to peace and

stability and promoting sustainable growth in the Sahel region and Gulf of Guinea coastal countries.

To commemorate the 30th anniversary of TICAD, which was launched in 1993, a TICAD 30th Anniversary Event, “TICAD’s 30-Year History and Prospects,” was held in Tokyo in August, and a TICAD 30th Anniversary Event was also held at UN Headquarters in New York in December, where frank discussions were held on the past achievements and future direction of TICAD. Japan has long embodied its commitment to promoting Africa's growth while maintaining close ties with African nations, and as “a partner growing together with Africa,” Japan will promote African development with approaches quintessentially Japanese, focusing on “people” to realize the resilient Africa that Africa itself aims to achieve.

(5) Approaches to Appropriate and Effective Implementation of ODA

A Approaches to Appropriate Implementation of ODA

In the implementation of ODA, efforts are made to enhance transparency and quality by listening to the views of external experts at each phase and formulating projects based on these opinions. In the phase of preliminary studies prior to the implementation of ODA, MOFA holds the Development Project Accountability

Committee meeting in public, exchanges views with independent committee members that have knowledge of the relevant fields and affirms the validity of the project. Furthermore, JICA publishes ex-post evaluation results for all projects valued at 200 million Japanese yen or more (5,219 projects published as of the end of September 30, 2023) on the “ODA Mieru-ka Site” after the implementation of the projects in view of enhancing the transparency of the projects. Ex-post evaluations for projects valued at 1 billion Japanese yen or more are conducted by third parties. MOFA conducts third party evaluations at the policy level (such as country assistance evaluations, thematic evaluations, and aid modality evaluations) and ex-post evaluations on grant aid projects implemented by MOFA to improve ODA management and ensure accountability. Efforts are made to utilize the suggestions and lessons drawn from the evaluation for the policy formation and project implementation of future ODA. MOFA also publishes the evaluation results on its website.

B Approaches to Effective Implementation of ODA

In order to utilize the limited budget efficiently and achieve a high level of development effectiveness, MOFA formulates a development cooperation policy for each country based on the priority policies of the development cooperation charter, comprehensively taking into account the development plans and development challenges of respective partner countries.

Moreover, the Rolling Plan is formulated as an appendix to the Country Development Cooperation Policy, with a summary for quick reference on how each individual ODA project is associated with a specific priority area. Through these efforts, the policy of development cooperation in each country is clearly identified, enabling more strategic projects to be formed across the confines of each framework.

C Efforts with regard to International Discussions on ODA

Japan also contributes actively to international discussions on ODA. At the OECD/DAC, discussions are being held on promotion of mobilization of private-sector funds with ODA as a catalyst, and assistance for climate change related issues. In addition, OECD/

DAC is working to provide opportunities for mutual learning so that development assistance provided by emerging donors will be accountable and transparent in a manner consistent with international standards and practices.

D Efforts toward Promoting Understanding of ODA

It is vital to have the understanding and support of the people when implementing development cooperation. To that end, efforts are made to promote understanding among the citizens through the effective dissemination of information. MOFA strives to promote publicity on Japan's development cooperation activities among a wider range of targets in an easy-to-understand manner through social media, such as the MOFA website, ODA X account (former Twitter), as well as through YouTube videos, e-mail subscriptions, and other tools. MOFA has created new documentary videos and television drama on development cooperation, etc. Furthermore, Global Festa Japan was held both online and in-person as a hybrid event, which attracted more than 39,000 participants in-person and online in two days between September 30 and October 1. MOFA has



First Step 2: Sekai wo Tsunagu Yuki no Kotoba, Television drama now available (as of February 2024)



Japanese Women Delivering Hope in a World of Uncertainty, Documentary video now available (as of February 2024)

continued to dispatch ministry officials to educational organizations in actively conducting “ODA Delivery Lectures” as part of its efforts to promote understanding of development cooperation. In addition, MOFA makes active efforts in overseas publicity, including site-visit tours to its development cooperation project for the local media so that they will also cover Japan's cooperation, and issues PR pamphlets and materials in English and local languages.

2 Response to Global Issues

(1) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the 2030 Agenda)” was adopted at the United Nations (UN) Summit in September 2015 as a successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) elaborated in 2001. The 2030 Agenda sets out international development goals for realizing a sustainable, diverse and inclusive society under the principle of “Leave No One Behind,” by 2030. The 2030 Agenda lists the “Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” consisting of 17 goals and 169 targets that are interrelated and closely linked to each other, and which serve as development goals for the whole of the international community including developed countries. After the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, Japan first built a foundation for the implementation of the SDGs by establishing the SDGs Promotion Headquarters headed by the Prime Minister, with the Chief Cabinet Secretary and Foreign Minister as the Deputy Director-Generals and composed of all cabinet ministers as members, and formulating the SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles that set out Japan's medium- to long-term strategy toward the achievement of the SDGs. Furthermore, Japan puts great importance on public-private partnership for the implementation of the SDGs, and established the SDGs Promotion Round Table Meeting, bringing together stakeholders from a wide range of fields including the private sector, civil society, experts, and international organizations. It also engages in the exchange of views on initiatives by local governments and businesses toward the promotion of the SDGs, measures for the empowerment

of youth and women, and strengthening cooperation with the international community among others.

In 2023, the mid-way point for achieving the SDGs, at the SDG Summit held at the UN in September, Prime Minister Kishida stated that Japan would lead the world's efforts to achieve the SDGs by upholding “human dignity” as a principle that supports solidarity throughout the international community, and in December, revisions were made to the SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles for the first time in four years. In the remaining period until 2030, the target achievement year, Japan will continue to promote efforts to achieve the SDGs in Japan and in the international community as a whole based on the Implementation Guiding Principles.

A Human Security

Human security is a concept that pursues the creation of a country and society where individuals can live happily and in dignity, free from fear and want. Japan has long advocated human security as a pillar of its diplomacy, and in the Development Cooperation Charter revised in June, Japan positioned human security as a guiding principle that underlies all of its development cooperation.

In addition, the Leaders' Communiqué for the G7 Hiroshima Summit, which Japan hosted in May as chair, referred to the promotion of human security in the new era aiming to realize a society that leaves no one behind. Japan has also led discussions at the UN and has contributed a cumulative total of approximately 50 billion Japanese yen by the end of 2022 to the UN Trust Fund for Human Security, which was established at Japan's initiative in 1999, to support the dissemination and implementation of human security by UN agencies. Furthermore, in the area of bilateral cooperation, Japan has also put effort into the dissemination and implementation of this concept through support including Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects. The SDGs, which advocate a people-centered approach and the vision of leaving no one behind, also position human security at their core. At the SDG Summit held at the UN in September, Prime Minister Kishida stated that human security is a key concept for achieving the SDGs based on “human dignity.” Furthermore, in early 2024, the report of the

Secretary-General on human security was issued for the first time in a decade, and it is expected that discussions on human security will be reinvigorated in the UN and other international arenas in the future.

B Approaches in the Area of Disaster Risk Reduction

While there are concerns about frequent and intensified disasters due to climate change, disaster risk reduction is essential for realizing poverty eradication and sustainable development. Japan makes the most of its expertise in disaster risk reduction, built up through numerous experiences with disasters, to actively promote international cooperation. The year 2023 marked the halfway point of the “Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030,” a guideline for efforts by the international community adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai (2015), which was spearheaded by Japan. In May, the “high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction” was held at the UN Headquarters to assess the progress of efforts in the field of disaster risk reduction to date. The meeting also indicated the need to accelerate efforts by each stakeholder to achieve the goals by 2030. Furthermore, coinciding with World Tsunami Awareness Day (November 5), proposed by Japan and enacted unanimously at the 70th UN General Assembly held in December 2015, Japan hosts the High School Students Summit on “World Tsunami Awareness Day,” as well as events in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) aimed at raising awareness of tsunami preparedness. In cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Japan also provides training on Tsunamis for women administrators and other officials in Asia and the Pacific and supports Tsunami evacuation drills for schools in cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Hiroshima Office. Japan will continue to share its experiences and lessons learned from disasters with the rest of the world and promote “Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction” to introduce the perspective of disaster risk reduction into the policies of each country.

C Education

In the area of education, Japan is engaged in various forms of educational support around the world under the “Learning Strategy for Peace and Growth,” announced by Japan in line with the timing for the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. In September 2022, Prime Minister Kishida declared Japan’s intent to promote human resource development with investment in human assets placed at the core and “Education for Sustainable Development” (ESD) at the UN Transforming Education Summit (TES) held under UN Secretary-General António Guterres’ initiative. In the same month, Prime Minister Kishida assumed the position as an “Education Champion” in charge of maintaining the momentum of the summit in promoting global education transformation. Furthermore, at the G7 Hiroshima Summit, the G7 committed to making progress for ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education. In light of these developments, as stated in the Development Cooperation Charter (June 2023), Japan will continue to promote education, considering the perspectives of quality education for all, empowerment of women, children, and the youth, and ensuring educational opportunities in conflict and disaster situations.

D Approaches in Agricultural Areas

In coordination with the relevant countries, such as G7 and G20 member states and international organizations, Japan has delivered assistance for agriculture and rural development in developing countries. Since 2020, through support via international organizations and others, Japan has been addressing issues of deterioration within the food system due to the stagnation in distribution of agricultural products as a result of travel restrictions due to the spread of COVID-19 and the situation in Ukraine. As for international efforts, at the G7 Hiroshima Summit, the Hiroshima Action Statement for Resilient Global Food Security was issued, with the goal of realizing global food security and achieving zero hunger.

E Approaches in the Area of Water and Sanitation

Japan has continuously been one of the largest donor countries in the area of water and sanitation since the

1990s. Furthermore, Japan has implemented high quality assistance utilizing Japan's experiences, expertise, and technologies, as well as proactively participated in discussions in the international community. At the UN 2023 Water Conference held in March, KAMIKAWA Yoko, Special Envoy of Prime Minister of Japan (Member of the House of Representatives) co-chaired the thematic discussion "Water for Climate, Resilience, and Environment" and compiled recommendations for the resilience in the water sector in the world, based on Japan's experience in water-related disaster risk reduction.

(2) Global Health

Health is a basic condition that is essential to achieving human security that Japan is advocating for, which protects the survival, livelihood, and dignity of each individual. The global spread of COVID-19 has shed light on the fact that global health is not only directly relevant to people's health but is also an important issue for the global society, including that of Japan's. This includes major risks in the economy, society, and security. Given this understanding, and with lessons learned during COVID-19, the Government of Japan formulated its new Global Health Strategy in May 2022. The strategy outlines Japan's goals to contribute to developing a global health architecture (GHA), strengthen Prevention, Preparedness and Response (PPR) to public health emergencies such as pandemics, and achieve a more resilient, more equitable, and more sustainable universal health coverage (UHC)¹² that is required in the post-COVID-19 era to ensure human security (See the Column on page 287).

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, Japan, as the chair, led discussions around three pillars of (a) develop and strengthen GHA to respond to public health crises, (b) the goal of achieving more resilient, more equitable, and more sustainable universal health coverage (UHC), and (c) promoting health innovation to address various health challenges.

Specifically, the G7 Leaders confirmed that they will develop and strengthen GHA through: improving international health governance; strengthening

collaboration between finance and health authorities; financial initiatives, including support through the Pandemic Fund¹³ and consideration of a rapid and efficient funding mechanism for pandemic response; and strengthening international norms and standards through negotiations on the amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR) and the drafting of a new legal instrument (the so-called "WHO Pandemic Agreement") by the World Health Organization (WHO) concerning the PPR for pandemics.

With regard to their contribution to the achievement of UHC, the G7 Leaders also confirmed the facilitation of addressing various health challenges set back by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and stressed the need to tackle communicable diseases including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, hepatitis, malaria, polio, measles, cholera, and neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), antimicrobial resistance (AMR), non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including mental health conditions, maternal and child health, realizing comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) for all, and promoting healthy aging, routine immunization, improved nutrition, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). They pledged to contribute more than 48 billion U.S. dollars in public and private sector funds to achieve UHC and contribute to international health, including strengthening PPR. From Japan, Prime Minister Kishida expressed his country's intention to contribute a total of 7.5 billion U.S. dollars from the public and private sectors between 2022 and 2025, including a pledge of 200 million U.S. dollars to the Global Health Innovative Technology Fund (GHIT), as part of the G7's total financial contribution. The G7 Leaders stated their commitment to continue contributing to the achievement of UHC around the world by 2030, endorsing the "Impact Investment Initiative for Global Health (Triple I for Global Health)," which aims to solve health challenges by mobilizing private-sector funds through impact investment, and the "G7 Global Plan for UHC," which outlines actions that G7 countries should take to achieve UHC worldwide.

¹² UHC: Universal Health Coverage; All people can receive basic health services when they need them at an affordable cost without financial hardship.

¹³ A financial intermediary fund for PPR established within the World Bank in 2022 as a new financing mechanism to address the financing gap in the existing international health system in response to the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Japan has pledged a total contribution of 70 million U.S. dollars to the Fund (of which 50 million U.S. dollars has already been disbursed).

In addition, with regard to the promotion of health innovation, which is key to strengthening GHA and achieving UHC, the G7 Leaders announced the “G7 Hiroshima Vision for Equitable Access to Medical Countermeasures (MCMs),” which outlines basic ideas and principles such as equity and inclusivity with regard to securing equitable access to MCMs including vaccines, which was a particular challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, based on this Hiroshima Vision, the G7 Leaders launched the “MCM Delivery Partnership for equitable access” (MCDP). The MCDP is a cooperative effort focusing on the delivery of MCMs that leverages the knowledge and lessons learned from Japan’s pioneering Last Mile support for the COVID-19 vaccine. In the future, the MCDP is expected to work with related efforts by the WHO, in cooperation with relevant countries and organizations including the G7, G20, WHO, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

In September, on the occasion of the 78th UN General Assembly, the first high-level health-related

meeting since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic and side events, including one hosted by Japan, were held, featuring active discussions on global health at the summit level. At the first UN High-Level Meeting on Pandemic PPR, Foreign Minister Kamikawa reiterated to the international community Japan’s proactive stance on strengthening PPR; and at the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on UHC, Prime Minister Kishida communicated that the international community should continue to act toward achieving UHC. The G7 Health Follow-up Side Event, hosted by Japan, was attended by Prime Minister Kishida and Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare TAKEMI Keizo, as well as leaders and ministers from the G7, Thailand, Georgia, Bangladesh and Brazil, heads of international organizations such as WHO, World Bank and UNICEF, Bill Gates, Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, SHIBUSAWA Ken, Chairman of the GSG National Advisory Board, and others. Prime Minister Kishida confirmed the promotion of the MCDP and announced the launch



Prime Minister Kishida holding a press conference as Chair of the G7 Hiroshima Summit (May 21, Hiroshima Prefecture; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)



G7 Hiroshima Summit Session 6: Working Together to Address Multiple Crises, which discussed Global Health (May 21, Hiroshima Prefecture; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)



Prime Minister Kishida delivering the opening remarks at the G7 Health Follow-up Side Event (September 21, New York, U.S.; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)



Prime Minister Kishida and Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare Takemi participating in the G7 Health Follow-up Side Event (September 21, New York, U.S.; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

of “Triple I.”¹⁴ He also announced the creation of a new yen loan program to enable developing countries to mobilize the necessary funds for PPR in a flexible and effective manner and reaffirmed the international community’s commitment to achieving UHC and strengthening PPR with world leaders.

Based on these achievements, Japan will continue to contribute to the promotion of global health, including negotiations on the WHO Pandemic Agreement, which is scheduled for submission and adoption at the 77th WHO General Assembly in May 2024, and international efforts to ensure equitable access to MCMs.

(3) Labor and Employment

It is important to raise income levels through employment, in order to improve the living standards of those who are in poverty. Against the background of an expanding supply-chain worldwide, it is necessary to put effort into developing the labor environment, and to realize “decent work” (work that is of an acceptable

quality for motivated human beings) around the world. The realization of “Decent work,” which is one of the SDGs, has been positioned as a primary objective of the activities of the International Labour Organization (ILO). In view of this, Japan is committed to sustainable development in the area of labor, not only through its mandatory contributions to the ILO, but also through proactive support through voluntary contributions for the improvement of standards on occupational safety and health and the establishment of social insurance systems in developing countries. Furthermore, at the G7 Hiroshima Summit, the G7 Leaders issued a Leaders’ Communiqué that included the following points: ensuring respect for international labor standards, human rights and the fundamental conventions of the ILO in global value chains (international division of labor in manufacturing), and active involvement in the promotion of decent work, including technical cooperation.

COLUMN

Japan’s Initiatives for Achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

Universal health coverage (UHC) is a state in which all people have access to basic health care services when they need them at an affordable cost without financial hardship. Japan established a universal health insurance system in 1961 and has built one of the world’s healthiest and longest-living societies, while promoting UHC in Japan and contributing to the achievement of UHC throughout the world.

Some may ask why Japan, which has already built a healthy and long-lived society, should support the achievement of UHC globally. Wouldn’t it be sufficient to promote UHC only in one’s own country? The COVID-19 pandemic on a global scale showed that infectious diseases and other health crises are challenges that cannot be solved by any one country alone.

The recent pandemic shed light on the fact that in a global society, infectious diseases spread across national borders and throughout the international community along with the movement of people. It became evident that even if Japan alone were to build a strong health system and promote UHC only within itself, it would not be able to evade the threat of infectious disease spread due to weak health systems in countries around the globe. One of the lessons learned from COVID-19 is that achieving UHC worldwide will contribute to human health and stability of economy, society and security in the international community, including Japan.

Even before COVID-19, Japan has been a leader in global efforts to achieve UHC. When the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were defined by the United Nations in September 2015, Japan pushed for UHC achievement to be

¹⁴ G7 Impact Investment Initiative for Global Health, endorsed at the G7 Hiroshima Summit, to accelerate private capital mobilization through impact investing.

positioned as one of the targets (SDG Target 3.8). Subsequently, at the G7 Ise-Shima Summit in May 2016, UHC was addressed as a major theme for the first time and the G7 Ise-Shima Vision for Global Health was issued.

Japan also contributed to the launch of the “International Health Partnership for UHC 2030 (UHC2030)” (June 2016), an international health partnership to achieve UHC by 2030. Furthermore, in December 2018, Japan spearheaded the establishment of the Group of Friends on UHC, a group of countries volunteering to build momentum for the achievement of UHC, and as Chair of the Group of Friends, Japan played a pivotal role in compiling the UHC Political Declaration at the first UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on UHC in September 2019.

Moreover, in addition to building a Global Health Architecture (GHA) and strengthening Prevention, Preparedness and Response (PPR) against public health emergencies, including pandemics, Japan established the “Global Health Strategy” in May 2022 with the policy goal of achieving more resilient, more equitable, and more sustainable UHC required in the new post-COVID-19 era based on lessons learned from the pandemic. Based on this strategy, Japan announced its intention to contribute a total of 7.5 billion U.S. dollars between 2022 and 2025 in public and private funds to international health, including UHC, while the G7 will contribute a total of more than 48 billion U.S. dollars in public and private funds to the field at the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May 2023, in which Japan served as the chair. In addition, the G7 countries have compiled a “G7 Global Plan for UHC Action Agenda” consisting of actions to be taken to achieve UHC for the world as a whole. Subsequently, at the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on UHC held in September 2023, the Political Declaration was approved, with Japan being also actively involved in its negotiations. A strong commitment was demonstrated to achieving goals such as delivering basic health services to all by 2030, which was also confirmed at the 2019 High-Level Meeting on UHC. At this High-Level Meeting on UHC in 2023, Prime Minister Kishida reiterated that the international community should take action to achieve UHC and stated that Japan is also determined to further lead the efforts by the international community to achieve UHC by 2030 for the entire world, including with developing countries.

Japan will once again hold the G7 Presidency in 2030, the target year for achieving global UHC. Japan will continue to contribute to the achievement of UHC across the globe, drawing on its own knowledge of UHC and the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.



Prime Minister Kishida attending the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on UHC (September 21, New York, U.S.; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

(4) Environmental Issues and Climate Change

A Global Environmental Issues

Further awareness has been built worldwide on the importance of addressing global environmental issues and global interest in these issues has also risen, as exemplified by the 2030 Agenda, which embeds environmental goals. Japan is actively involved in conserving the natural environment and realizing sustainable development through negotiations and engagements in various multilateral environmental agreements and relevant international organizations.

As one of the major donors for Global Environment Facility (GEF) of the World Bank, which is a financing mechanism for the major environmental conventions, Japan also contributes to projects that address global environmental issues.

(A) Conservation of the Marine Environment

Addressing the problem of marine plastic litter, as a matter of urgency, is growing in importance in recent years, given its potential adverse impact on marine ecology, tourism, fisheries, and human health. The problem is caused by factors such as the illegal

dumping of waste and inappropriate waste management. In order to achieve “the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision” that was launched at the G20 Osaka Summit in 2019, which aims to reduce additional pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050, Japan is working with international organizations, including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in areas such as compiling scientific knowledge and providing assistance on building models necessary for measures against pollution by marine plastic litter, in providing support for environmentally sound management of plastic waste and disposal mainly in the Asian region.

In response to the growing momentum for creating a new international framework to address plastics pollution including in the marine environment, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) was established at the Resumed Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly held in March 2022 for the development of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, and it was decided to aim to complete the work by the end of 2024. At the second and third sessions of INC held in May and November, respectively, Japan insisted that the objective of the said international document (the treaty) should include the ambition to reduce additional plastic pollution to zero by 2040, and the need for provisions for establishing a plastic resource recycling mechanism for society as a whole and addressing the issue throughout the entire lifecycle of plastic from production to waste management should be established as the comprehensive obligations of each country under the treaty. Japan will continue to play a leading role in this area, while encouraging formation of effective and progressive rules.

The Fifth Leaders Meeting of the High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, which is comprised of leaders of maritime nations and was established to discuss matters such as conservation of marine environments, fisheries and utilization of marine resources, was held in September, and was attended by Foreign Minister Kamikawa as a representative of Prime Minister Kishida. Foreign Minister Kamikawa introduced the establishment of Japan's Fourth Basic Plan on Ocean Policy, and expressed her hope that the

ambition to reduce additional plastic pollution to zero by 2040 will be shared by many countries, while stating that Japan's leading efforts, such as those related to blue carbon (carbon fixation by marine ecosystems), will be disseminated as the “Japan Model.”

(B) Conservation of Biodiversity

In December 2022, the second part of the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) was held in Montreal, Canada. A new global target for biodiversity, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), was adopted. Based on this, Japan revised its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan in March and is steadily implementing the GBF. In October, the resumed second part of COP15, the 10th Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol and the 4th Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol were held in Nairobi (Kenya), where decisions were adopted on the remaining agenda items before these meetings were officially closed.

In August, the Seventh GEF Assembly was held in Vancouver (Canada) and approved the establishment of the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF), which operates under the GEF in order to facilitate the implementation of the GBF. On December 9, at the side event of the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE)), the Minister of the Environment ITO Shintaro announced a 650 million Japanese yen contribution to the GBFF.

In recent years, illegal wildlife trade has exacerbated, drawing international attention as one of the key sources of funding for international terrorist organizations. Japan has been earnestly addressing this issue through contributions to the CITES¹⁵ Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) Programme among others. In recent years, Japan has provided poaching monitoring facilities to Zambia and Rwanda in 2022. In addition, Japan decided to provide facilities related to wildlife poaching and conservation measures to Botswana in 2022 and to Zimbabwe in 2023. Japan also attended the 77th session of the CITES Standing

¹⁵ CITES : Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

Committee (Geneva, Switzerland) in November where it actively contributed to international discussions.

Japan also contributes to international rule-making for promoting conservation and sustainable uses of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, with a view to enhancing sustainable agriculture and food security. At the 10th Session of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGR) Governing Body held in Rome, Italy in November, Japan participated in discussions for expanding the scope of genetic resources covered by the Multilateral System (MLS) and enhancing their functions, in order to promote access and utilization of genetic resources, such as breeding.

With regard to efforts through the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Japan continued to implement projects in the field in 2023 that contribute to the sustainable management of tropical forests and the promotion of sustainable and legal trade in tropical timber through its contributions to ITTO. In November, the 59th Session of the Council of the ITTO was held in Pattaya, Thailand, to discuss the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA), which forms the basis of the ITTO and will expire in 2026, as well as the administrative budget. Regarding the extension of the ITTA, it was decided that the decision will be made by the written responses from the member countries by June 1, 2024.

(C) International Management of Chemicals and Hazardous Waste

The 35th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in October. At the meeting, matters such as replenishment of the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol to support developing countries as well efficient and effective operations of the protocol were discussed among the Parties.

In May, in Geneva, Switzerland, Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, and Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain

Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade were jointly held, in which matters were discussed such as technical cooperation common to the three treaties and the implementation of efficient measures through their enhanced coordination, in addition to issues related to the operation of each Convention, including the adoption of Annex amendments.

In September, the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management was held in Bonn, Germany, and adopted “the Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC) – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste” as a new framework for international chemicals management.

From October to November, the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury was held in Geneva, Switzerland, where discussions took place on amendments to Annexes and the threshold for mercury-contaminated waste subject to the regulation.¹⁶

B Climate Change

(A) Initiatives to Achieve Carbon Neutrality by 2050

In October 2020, Japan declared that it would aim to realize carbon neutrality with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. At the Leaders’ Summit on Climate, hosted by the U.S. in April 2021, Japan declared that it aims to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 46% in fiscal year 2030 from its fiscal year 2013 levels, setting an ambitious target which is aligned with the goal of net-zero by 2050. Furthermore, Japan will continue its strenuous efforts in its challenge to meet the lofty goal of cutting its emissions by 50%. In October 2021, Japan submitted its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) that reflects the new reduction target and Long-term Strategy under the Paris Agreement that reflects initiatives aimed at achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat.

(B) The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Paris Agreement

Global efforts are essential in reducing greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change; however, the Kyoto

¹⁶ A boundary value that is affected above a certain value and not below it.

Protocol adopted at the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP3) in 1997 required only developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Paris Agreement was adopted at COP21 held in Paris in December 2015. The Paris Agreement is a fair and effective framework that provides that parties communicate their nationally determined contributions to greenhouse gas emission reductions and undertake efforts toward the achievement of such goals regardless of whether they are developed or developing countries. The Agreement entered into force in November 2016, and has been ratified by 195 countries and institutions including Japan (as of December 2023).

At COP28, held in Dubai, UAE, from November 30 to December 13, a decision on the Global Stocktake (GST) to assess collective progress toward achieving the purpose of the Paris Agreement, as well as a decision on the framework for the new funding arrangements, including a fund for responding to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, were adopted.

In the GST, in order to achieve the 1.5°C goal,¹⁷ ambitious emission reduction targets for all greenhouse gases and sectors were established, peaking global greenhouse gas emissions at the latest before 2025. In addition, sector-specific contributions (such as a tripling of renewable energy capacity globally and doubling the global average annual rate of energy efficiency, as well as accelerating zero- and low-emission technologies including renewables, nuclear, CCUS,¹⁸ low-carbon hydrogen, efforts in the fossil fuel and transport sectors, etc.) were decided, taking into account the different national circumstances, pathways, and approaches.

Regarding the fund for responding to loss and damage, it was decided that it will target assistance to developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, that it would be established under the World Bank, and that developed countries would defray the start-up costs while contributions would come from all sources, including public funds, private funds, and innovative sources.

Prime Minister Kishida attended the “Global Climate Action Summit,” a summit-level meeting held on December 1 and 2, during COP28, where he emphasized that our action until 2030 is critical. He stated that setting the economy-wide absolute reduction target covering all greenhouse gases and peaking global greenhouse gas emissions by 2025 are all required to achieve the global goal of net-zero by 2050. He also called for a common goal of achieving net-zero for all countries through various pathways that are compatible with economic growth and energy security. Furthermore, on top of thorough energy conservation, maximum deployment of clean energy through making renewable energy the main source of power, and utilizing nuclear power and other measures, he expressed Japan's commitment, in line with its pathway to net-zero, to terminate the construction of domestic unabated coal power plants while ensuring a stable energy supply.

(C) Japan's Contributions to the International Community

Developed countries including Japan have provided various assistance for developing countries so that those countries can implement sufficient climate change measures. Those supports include financial support, capacity building, and technology transfer.

The Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP), launched at COP26, created a Comprehensive Investment and Policy plan for Indonesia, where Japan serves as a co-lead country with the U.S., and a Resource Mobilization Plan for Viet Nam, where Japan serves as partner country. In the coming years, specific energy transition initiatives will be implemented in JETP countries in accordance with these plans.

Japan announced in 2021 at the G7 Cornwall Summit and at COP26 that it would provide climate assistance in both private and public finance totaling 70 billion U.S. dollars over five years between 2021 and 2025, and would double its assistance for adaptation, totaling 14.8 billion U.S. dollars. From such perspectives, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) also plays an important role as a multilateral climate fund that

¹⁷ The goal stated in the Paris Agreement, which is to limit the global average temperature increase to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to continue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels.

¹⁸ CCUS : Carbon dioxide Capture Utilization and Storage

provides support for developing countries to address climate change. Japan has contributed approximately 319 billion Japanese yen to date, and at the high-level pledging meeting for the GCF's second replenishment in October, Japan announced its commitment to contribute up to 165 billion Japanese yen for second replenishment (from 2024 to 2027), which is the same amount as the first replenishment.

In December, the First Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC) Leaders Meeting was held in conjunction with the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. The leaders of AZEC partner countries confirmed the importance of simultaneously achieving decarbonization, economic growth, and energy security, and of pursuing the common goal of carbon neutrality through diverse pathways tailored to each country's circumstances, and agreed to continue their cooperation.

(D) Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM)

The JCM is a mechanism for contributing to greenhouse gas emissions reduction and removal in partner countries through diffusion of advanced decarbonization technologies. The mechanism allows Japan to acquire a portion of credits (or emission allowance) from its contribution, assisting both Japan and the partner countries to achieve their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). Japan plans to further expand the JCM globally, reflecting the adoption of the implementation guidelines of market mechanisms adopted at COP26 in 2021. The "Grand Design and Action Plan for a New Form of Capitalism Follow-up" approved by the Cabinet Office in June 2022 states that Japan will accelerate consultation with relevant countries, aiming to increase JCM partner countries up to around 30 by year 2025. Japan signed the Memorandum of Cooperation on the Joint Crediting Mechanism with 11 additional countries since 2022 and had established the JCM with 28 countries by the end of December 2023.

(E) Japan's efforts in Strengthening its Resilience to Impacts Resulting from Climate Change

Japan's Development Cooperation Charter, revised in June, and the National Security Strategy, revised in

December 2022, include the promotion of assistance for both mitigation measures, including decarbonization (such as emissions reduction and removals enhancement of greenhouse gases), and adaptation measures (e.g., avoidance and reduction of damage caused by climate change) for island nations and other developing countries so that sustainable and resilient economies and societies can be built. Japan will provide assistance that contributes to both economic growth and climate change countermeasures, depending on the circumstances of each country and region.

In addition, the Global Shield Financing Facility (GSFF) was launched in 2022 with the aim of increasing the capacity of developing countries to cope with climate change and disasters, and to increase their financial resilience. GSFF provides financial and technical assistance for risk financing such as disaster risk insurance, including the establishment and strengthening of regional risk pools and premium financing for risk transfer, to which Japan also contributed 800 million Japanese yen in March 2023.

Furthermore, in response to the COP28's decision on the general framework of the scheme to address loss and damage, Japan expressed its readiness to contribute 10 million U.S. dollars for the launch of the fund. Japan supports the early operationalization of the fund through contributions to start-up costs and will continue to actively contribute to discussions on the appropriate management of the fund.

(5) Arctic and Antarctic

A Arctic

(A) Current State of the Arctic

The Arctic Circle is centered on the Arctic Ocean and extends north of 66°33' north latitude. Five countries (the U.S., Canada, Denmark, Norway, and Russia) are the Arctic Ocean coastal States, and eight countries (adding Iceland, Sweden, and Finland to the above five countries) are the Arctic States.

If effective countermeasures are not taken, the Arctic Ocean's summer sea ice will likely disappear almost completely by the middle of this century. Furthermore, the effects of global warming are more amplified in the Arctic than in any other region of the globe, and rapid changes in the Arctic environment due to global warming could have serious and irreversible effects on the

livelihoods of the inhabitants and the ecosystems of the Arctic. On the other hand, the decreasing amount of sea ice is giving rise to growing economic opportunities such as the use of the Northern Sea Route and the development of resources. Some Arctic States are also strengthening their security initiatives to secure their own interests.

The Arctic Council (AC),¹⁹ established by the eight Arctic States, plays a central role in addressing issues related to the Arctic. Based on the discussions and knowledge sharing with relevant countries and Indigenous peoples at the AC, policies decided at the Ministerial meetings are orienting cooperation in the Arctic. The Arctic policies of the Arctic States have identified climate change measures, environmental protection, sustainable development, and the rights and livelihoods of Indigenous peoples as priority issues, and cooperation on these issues is also taking place at the AC. In addition, while the AC does not address military and security issues, peace and security in the Arctic is a major challenge among the Arctic States.

Non-Arctic states have also become increasingly interested in the Arctic in recent years due to global warming and expanding economic opportunities. On top of Japan, the UK, France, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, China, India, Italy, Singapore, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Switzerland are observer states to the AC.

(B) Japan's Arctic Policy and International Activities

Japan is aiming to contribute to the global society with an emphasis on the three areas, research and development, international cooperation, and sustainable use, based on "Japan's Arctic Policy" announced in 2015.

As an observer of the AC, Japan has been contributing to the AC's efforts through discussions and knowledge sharing at the Senior Arctic Official meetings, the sectoral Working Groups, and the Expert Groups of the AC on topics such as conservation of Arctic flora and fauna, protection of Arctic marine environment, and sustainable development, and will continue to actively

participate in these meetings. In addition, the several forums held at the initiative of the Arctic States and attended by various stakeholders from industry, government, and academia, have also facilitated the exchange of opinions and sharing of knowledge on issues related to the Arctic. Japan also participates in these forums to share its knowledge on Arctic scientific research and to communicate the importance of the rule of law in the Arctic Ocean.

B Antarctic

(A) Japan and the Antarctic

Japan has been conducting Antarctic observation surveys utilizing its advanced technology at Syowa Station established in 1957, thereby contributing to global environment conservation and international development of science and technology. Moreover, as one of the original signatories of the Antarctic Treaty adopted in 1959, Japan strives to maintain and strengthen the Antarctic Treaty System, which is essential to the peaceful use of the Antarctic, while contributing to the promotion of environmental preservation and international cooperation in the Antarctic.

(B) The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) and the Protection of Antarctic Environment

At the 45th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM45) held from late May to early June in Helsinki, Finland, discussions were held on issues of climate change in the Antarctic and actions being taken by the Antarctic Treaty System.

(C) Japan's Antarctic Observation

As for Japan's Antarctic observation activities, Japan is implementing research and observation activities based on the 10th six-year plan of the Japanese Antarctic Research program (from FY2022 to FY2027), in addition to long-term continuous observation. The 10th six-year plan aims to conduct various research observation to understand past and present changes in the ice sheets, ocean and atmospheric general circulation,

¹⁹ An intergovernmental consultation body established in 1996 with the aim of promoting cooperation, coordination, and exchanges between the eight Arctic countries (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the U.S.), while gaining the involvement of Indigenous communities on common issues related to the Arctic region (in particular, sustainable development, environmental protection, etc.). (It does not address military and security issues.) Japan obtained the observer status in 2013.

and upper atmosphere in the Antarctic region as well as elucidating their mechanisms.

3 Science and Technology Diplomacy

Science and technology constitute the foundational elements for peace and prosperity that support socioeconomic development, and play a vital role in ensuring safety and security. By harnessing its own advanced science and technology, Japan promotes Science and Technology Diplomacy, thereby contributing to the development of science and technology at home and abroad, the promotion of relations with other countries, the peace and stability of the international community, and the resolution of global challenges. As part of science and technology diplomacy efforts, Japan places emphasis on initiatives implemented through the activities of the Science and Technology Advisor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

In September 2015, MOFA established the post of Science and Technology Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and appointed Prof. KISHI Teruo, Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo, as the first Science and Technology Advisor. Following the end of his term, Prof. Kishi was replaced by Prof. MATSUMOTO Yoichiro, Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo as the new advisor in April 2020. Moreover, Prof. KANO Mitsunobu, Professor of Okayama University, has assumed the post as the first Science and Technology Co-Advisor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs to support the work of the Science and Technology Advisor in April 2019.

In April 2022, Dr. KOTANI Motoko, Executive Vice President of Tohoku University, was appointed as the Science and Technology Co-Advisor for the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Prof. Matsumoto and Dr. Kotani support the activities of the Foreign Minister from the perspective of science and technology, and provide advice on the utilization of science, technology and innovation in the planning and coordination of various foreign policies to the Minister and relevant divisions.

Additionally, the Science and Technology Diplomacy Advisory Network, composed of academic experts in a variety of science and technology fields, has been established under the supervision of the Science and Technology Advisor, aiming to make further contributions in the process of planning and formulating various diplomatic policies. As part of this network, “The Advisory Board for Promoting Science & Technology Diplomacy,” consisting of 20 experts from related fields, with Prof. Matsumoto as the chair and Dr. Kotani as the vice-chair, hold meetings regularly to discuss various topics aimed at enhancing the structure and function of science and technology diplomacy. In 2023, the 6th Advisory Board Meeting was held in August. In addition, according to the recommendations for “Strengthening the Foundation of Science and Technology Capabilities” compiled by the Advisory Board in 2022, MOFA established Science and Technology Fellows at six diplomatic missions overseas with the aim of strengthening the functions that are important for promoting science and technology diplomacy, and appointed Japanese researchers and experts based overseas as fellows.²⁰

Prof. Matsumoto and Dr. Kotani exchanged views with the scientific advisors from various countries, through meetings such as the Foreign Ministries Science and Technology Advice Network (FMSTAN), in an effort to build and strengthen networks. Prof. Matsumoto visited Singapore in January, Australia in June, Spain in July, and Europe (London, UK and Geneva, Switzerland) in October. In Spain and



Foreign Minister Hayashi attending the 6th Meeting of the Advisory Board for Promoting Science & Technology Diplomacy (August 30, Tokyo)

²⁰ Six diplomatic missions: Embassy of Japan in India, Embassy of Japan in Israel, Embassy of Japan in Sweden, Embassy of Japan in the UK, Mission of Japan to the European Union, and Consulate-General of Japan in San Francisco.

Switzerland, he spoke at international conferences on science and technology diplomacy and exchanged views with researchers and science and technology policymakers on science, technology, and innovation policy and science and technology diplomacy initiatives at each location. In addition to Singapore and Europe, Dr. Kotani also visited Panama in June, Malaysia in October, and Australia in December, introducing Japan's science and technology diplomacy efforts at symposiums and meetings with local science and technology-related organizations, and exchanging views on science and technology cooperation and other issues with related parties.

Moreover, Prof. Matsumoto regularly hosts science and technology diplomacy seminars by inviting experts in various fields aimed at raising the level of knowledge within MOFA.

In terms of international science and technology cooperation, Japan has concluded 33 science and technology cooperation agreements bilaterally, and these are now in force with 47 countries and the EU.²¹ Based on these agreements, it organizes regular joint

committee meetings with these countries to engage in intergovernmental dialogue. In 2023, joint committee meetings were held with Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the U.S., Czech Republic, UK, and EU, respectively. Attended by delegates from the relevant ministries and agencies, consultations were held on the current status of cooperation in diverse sectors, and on the future direction of cooperation.

With regard to multilateral cooperation, as a member of the Board of the International Science and Technology Center (ISTC), which was established to support research for peaceful purposes conducted by researchers on weapons of mass destruction from the former Soviet Union, and now involved in a wide range of research and development such as chemistry, biology, radioactive materials and nuclear power, Japan works to provide support mainly to countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus region. Japan also participates in International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project to demonstrate the scientific and technological feasibility of nuclear fusion energy.

²¹ Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan each inherited the Japan-Russia Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement on different dates. In 1993, the Czech Republic and Slovakia respectively took over the Japan-Czechoslovakia Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement. Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia (the name of the country at that time), Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro inherited the Japan-Yugoslavia Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement on different dates.

3

Economic Diplomacy

1 Overview of Economic Diplomacy

In the international community, as competition among nations arises in the fields of politics, economy, and the military, the balance of power in the international arena is changing in an increasingly rapid and complex manner, while uncertainty over the existing international order is growing. The novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic caused a rapid worldwide economic downturn through the suppression of economic activity. Since then, although the global economy as a whole has shown signs of a gradual recovery as the impact of COVID-19 has waned, prices are now soaring due to a combination of a recovery in demand and the impact of the situation in Ukraine. The outlook remains uncertain due to volatility in financial and capital markets, ballooning governmental debt arising from COVID-19 countermeasures, rising maritime transport and other logistics costs, and rising energy and commodity costs.

Against this backdrop, Japan continued its attempts to expand and develop a free and fair economic order. One and a half years after the launch of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) negotiations, significant progress has been made, including the signing of the IPEF Supply Chain Agreement, and the substantial conclusion of the negotiations of the IPEF Clean Economy Agreement, and the IPEF Fair Economy Agreement. Regarding the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the first accession negotiations since the agreement entered into force were concluded with the UK, and the Protocol on the accession of the UK to the CPTPP was signed in July.

At the World Trade Organization (WTO), the cornerstone of the multilateral trading system,

efforts were made to strengthen the functions of the WTO regime, including acceptance of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement, conclusion of text negotiations on the Agreement on Investment Facilitation for Development being pursued by like-minded countries including Japan, progress toward making new rules in the areas of e-commerce and services domestic regulation respectively, and participation in the Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA).¹

Based on the above recognition, Japan will continue to accelerate its efforts to promote economic diplomacy, one of the priority areas of diplomacy, by focusing on the following three aspects: (1) rule-making and initiatives at international organizations to expand the free and fair economic order, such as the promotion of economic partnership agreements and the maintenance and strengthening of the multilateral trading system; (2) support for Japanese companies' overseas expansion by promoting public-private partnerships; and (3) resource diplomacy and inbound tourism promotion.

2 Efforts to expand the free and fair economic order

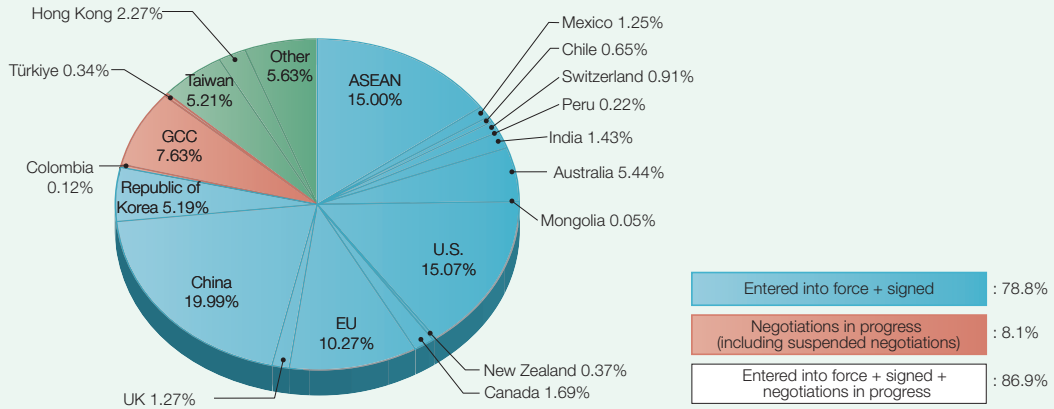
(1) Promotion of Economic Partnerships

In recent years, despite the advancement of economic globalism, there have been clear developments toward protectionism as COVID-19 infections spread, and furthermore, the global economy as a whole is in turmoil due to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. In such circumstances, Japan has emphasized and steadily promoted Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), which help capture the vitality of the growing market overseas and

¹ MPIA: Multi-party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement

An interim mechanism launched by like-minded members to substitute the functions of WTO's Appellate Body, which ceased to function since 2019, with the dispute settlement system provided for in the WTO Agreements.

Percentages of Japan's economic partnership agreement partner countries and regions within Japan's total trade



Source: Trade Statistics of Japan by the Ministry of Finance (released in January 2024)
(Percentages of each country's trade value are rounded to the nearest hundredth)

strengthen the basis of the Japanese economy through measures such as the reduction or elimination of tariffs on goods as well as barriers on trade in services, and through rule-making for trade and investment. In March 2023, the CPTPP members and the UK confirmed the substantial conclusion of the negotiations for the accession of the UK to the CPTPP, followed by the signing of the Protocol on the accession of the UK to the CPTPP in July. Also in the same month, Japan and the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council)² concurred on resuming negotiations for Japan-GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA) from 2024, which have been suspended since 2009.

This brought the EPA/FTA ratio in Japan's trade (the ratio of trade value with countries that have EPAs/FTAs already signed or entered into force with Japan, to Japan's total trade value) to around 78.8% (source: Trade Statistics, Ministry of Finance, 2024).

Furthermore, in January the Protocol Amending the Trade Agreement between Japan and the United States of America, which modifies the conditions for the application of agricultural safeguards on U.S. beef, entered into force.

Japan will continue working actively to maintain the high standards of the CPTPP, ensure the transparent implementation of the Regional Comprehensive

Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreements, and negotiate other economic partnership agreements in order to expand the free and fair economic order that is the basis for its own peace and prosperity.

A Multilateral Agreements, etc.

(A) Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)

The CPTPP is an agreement that promotes efforts to establish new economic integration rules for the 21st century in a wide range of areas such as tariffs, services, investments, E-commerce, intellectual property, and state-owned enterprises. It also provides opportunities for Japanese companies to better thrive in overseas markets, giving it important economic significance as a major driving force for the country's economic growth. Furthermore, the CPTPP has great strategic significance in that it will establish a free and fair economic order with countries sharing fundamental values and principles, including freedom, democracy, fundamental human rights and the rule of law, and contribute significantly to the security of Japan and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, ensuring regional and global peace and prosperity.

The 12 countries of Japan, Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore,

² Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): established by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait. Its purpose is to coordinate and integrate cooperation among participating countries in all areas, including defense and economics.

the U.S., and Viet Nam signed the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP Agreement) in February 2016. However, due to the U.S.' announcement of its withdrawal from the TPP Agreement in January 2017, Japan proactively led discussions among the 11 countries for the early realization of the TPP Agreement in principle was reached at the TPP Ministerial Meeting in November 2017, and the CPTPP was signed in Chile in March 2018. Six countries required for the entry into force of the agreement (Mexico, Japan, Singapore, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia) completed their domestic procedures and the agreement entered into force on December 30, 2018. The agreement entered into force for all 11 countries that signed it, with Viet Nam becoming a party in January 2019, Peru in September 2021, Malaysia in November 2022, Chile in February 2023, and Brunei in July.

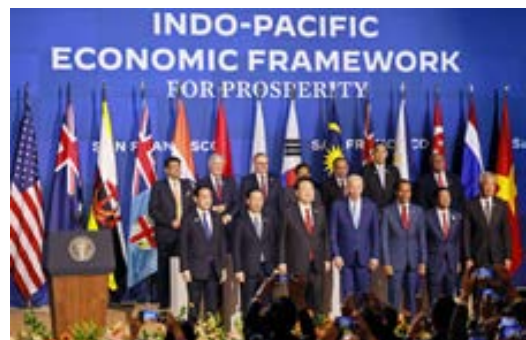
Since the CPTPP entered into force, seven CPTPP Commission meetings have been held mostly at the ministerial level. At the fourth meeting of the TPP Commission, held in June 2021, it was decided to start the process of the UK's request to join in February of that year and to establish an accession working group (AWG) for the UK membership, and the working group started meeting in September of that year. In March 2023, the CPTPP members and the UK held a ministerial meeting in an online format to confirm the substantial conclusion of the negotiations for the accession of the UK to the CPTPP. In July, the meeting of the 7th CPTPP Commission was held in New Zealand, where the Protocol on the accession of the UK to the CPTPP was signed. Based on the results of the negotiations, the Protocol sets out, among other things, the UK's compliance with the rules in each of the areas stipulated in the CPTPP and the market access commitments that the CPTPP Parties and the UK grant to each other. After signing the Protocol, Japan worked vigorously to complete its domestic procedures, and the Protocol was approved in December in the 212th extraordinary session of the Diet. In addition, a CPTPP Ministerial Meeting was held in the U.S. in November where discussions were held on how to deal with the accession requests and on future actions related to the "General Review" of the agreement. China requested to join on September 16, 2021; Taiwan on September 22, 2021; Ecuador on December 17, 2021; Costa Rica on

August 10, 2022; Uruguay on December 1, 2022; and Ukraine in May 2023. Japan will take a firm stand on whether the economies that have requested membership are fully capable of meeting the high standards of the CPTPP and have the intention and ability to continue to do so in their post-accession implementation, while also taking into account strategic perspectives and the understanding of the public.

(B) Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)

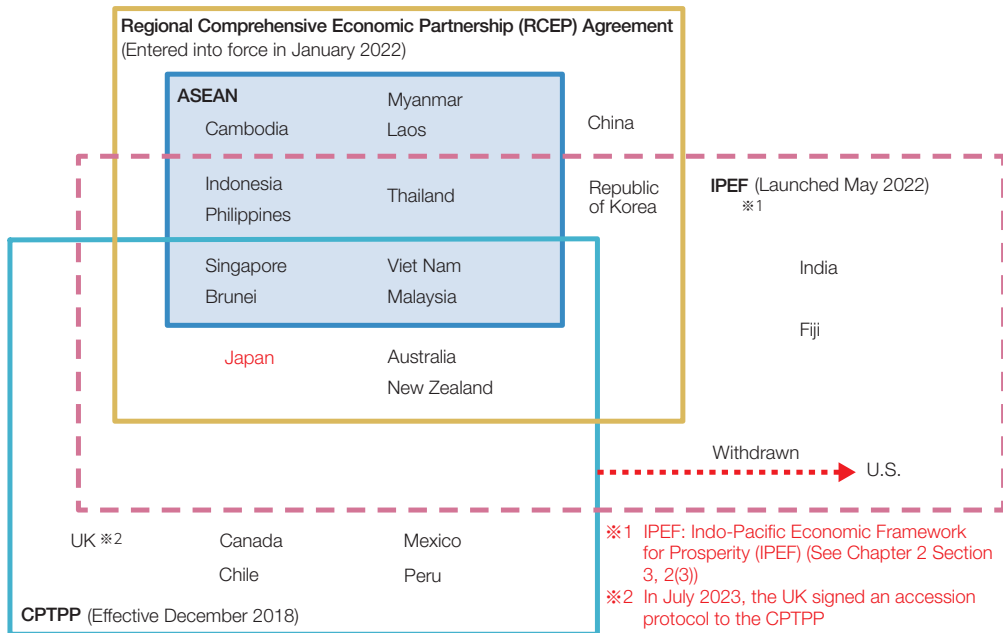
The IPEF is a framework for discussing economic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region and includes 14 countries: Australia, Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Singapore, Thailand, the U.S., and Viet Nam. The launch was announced in Tokyo in May 2022 to coincide with U.S. President Joseph Biden's visit to Japan, and the four pillars of Trade, Supply Chains, Clean Economy, and Fair Economy were agreed upon for subjects of negotiations at the IPEF Ministerial in Los Angeles in September of the same year. In May 2023, the substantial conclusion of the IPEF Supply Chain Agreement (Pillar 2) was announced at the IPEF Ministerial in Detroit.

In addition, an IPEF Leaders' Meeting and IPEF Ministerial were held in San Francisco in November. The San Francisco meeting saw the signing ceremony for the IPEF Supply Chain Agreement, as well as the announcement of the substantial conclusion of the negotiations of the IPEF Clean Economy Agreement (Pillar 3), the IPEF Fair Economy Agreement (Pillar 4), and the IPEF Agreement dealing with cross-cutting matters across each agreement under the IPEF. In addition to these



Prime Minister Kishida in attendance at the IPEF Leaders' Meeting (November 16, San Francisco, U.S.; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

Multilateral economic agreements in the Indo-Pacific region and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)



achievements, a Leaders' Statement was issued announcing the launch of the IPEF Critical Minerals Dialogue, the ministerial IPEF Council to be held annually from 2024 onward, and a biennial leaders' meeting.

Japan values the IPEF from the strategic perspective of U.S. engagement in the economic order in the Indo-Pacific region and will continue to work closely with regional partner countries, together with the U.S., toward building economic order and ensuring prosperity in the region to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the Indo-Pacific region.

(C) Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (Japan-EU EPA)

In February 2019, the Japan-EU EPA, which at the time accounted for about 30% of global GDP and 40% of global trade, entered into force. The EU is an important partner for Japan, being its third largest export partner (9.5% of total exports) and fourth largest import partner (9.6%) (both as of 2022).

In April 2023, the fourth meeting of the Joint Committee was held among ministers to discuss how to ensure the appropriate and effective operation of

the Japan-EU EPA and to exchange views on progress made in the areas of Geographical Indications (GI), regulatory cooperation, government procurement, and trade and sustainable development. In October, the ministers also held the EU-Japan High-Level Economic Dialogue and confirmed that negotiations on the inclusion of a "provisions on the free flow of data" into the Japan-EU EPA had reached an agreement in principle. The Government of Japan will continue to closely cooperate on further deepening the Japan-EU economic relationship by promoting efforts to ensure effective implementation of the EPA through minister-level meetings of the Joint Committee and specialized committees and working groups.

(D) Japan-UK Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (Japan-UK CEPA)

The Japan-UK EPA, which entered into force in January 2021 after the UK left the EU, is an important cornerstone for further deepening economic relations between Japan and the UK as global strategic partners who share fundamental values. The Japan-UK EPA, based on the Japan-EU EPA and comprising

24 chapters in total, stipulates rules that are more advanced and high-level than those of the Japan-EU EPA in such areas as electronic commerce and financial services. It is also Japan's first EPA to include a chapter on Japan-UK cooperation to promote women's access to the opportunities and benefits created by trade.

In October, the second meeting of the Japan-UK EPA Joint Committee was held among ministers, who reviewed the implementation of the EPA and confirmed further strengthening and promoting cooperation with regard to the economy. The Government of Japan will continue to promote efforts to ensure effective implementation of the EPA through minister-level meetings of the Joint Committee and specialized committees and working groups, and will continue to cooperate closely to further deepen economic relations between Japan and the UK.

(E) Japan-GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

FTA negotiations between Japan and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) began in 2006 and were subsequently suspended in 2009. In July 2023, Prime Minister Kishida visited Saudi Arabia, where he and GCC Secretary General Jasem Al Budaiwi concurred on resuming Japan-GCC Free Trade Agreement negotiations from 2024.

(F) Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement

The RCEP is an economic partnership agreement involving the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Japan, Australia, China, the ROK, and New Zealand. RCEP participating countries account for roughly 30% of the world's total GDP, total trade, and population. The entry into force of the Agreement is expected to further strengthen Japan's ties with the regions serving as the world's growth center, thus contributing to the economic growth of Japan. Following a ceremony to launch RCEP negotiations during the ASEAN-related summit meeting held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in November 2012, there were eight years of negotiations that included four summit meetings, 19 ministerial meetings, and 31 rounds of

negotiations. The Agreement was signed on the occasion of the fourth RCEP Summit on November 15, 2020.

The RCEP Agreement entered into force on January 1, 2022, and a total of five Joint Committee meetings and two Ministers' Meetings were held by the end of 2023. Japan, for its part, will work in close cooperation with the countries concerned to ensure that economic activities based on free and fair rules take root in the region by ensuring the transparent implementation of the RCEP Agreement.

Although India had participated from the start of negotiations, at the third Summit in November 2019, India declared that it would not participate in further negotiations and did not sign the RCEP Agreement.

However, at the signing, Signatory States issued a "Ministers' Declaration on India's Participation in the RCEP" based on a proposal from Japan. The declaration clarified that the Agreement would be open for India, and stipulated a facilitation of India's future accession and allowed it to participate in related meetings as an observer. Due to the significant economic and strategic importance of India's participation in the RCEP, Japan will continue to play a leading role for the future participation of India to the RCEP Agreement.

(G) Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP)

Concept

APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 (adopted at the 2020 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Meeting), which sets the medium- to long-term direction for the Asia-Pacific region, states an objective to "further advance the Bogor Goals³ and economic integration in the region in a manner that is market-driven, including through the work on the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) agenda which contributes to high standard and comprehensive regional undertakings." In 2022, an FTAAP Agenda Work Plan was agreed upon, and work is underway to materialize this vision.

Japan has been continuously working to share knowledge and support capacity building for the FTAAP agenda by holding policy dialogues on the "competition chapters" in FTAs and EPAs as well as on investment policies. The entering into force of the

³ Bogor Goals: "Developed economies will achieve the goal of free and open trade and investment by 2010 and developing economies by 2020," as decided at the APEC Summit in 1994.

CPTPP Agreement at the end of December 2018 and the RCEP Agreement in January 2022 also have significance from the perspective of achieving a high-quality and comprehensive FTAAP.

B Bilateral Agreements

Japan-Türkiye EPA

As an important country that serves as a hub among Europe, the Middle East, the Central Asia and Caucasus region, and Africa, Türkiye has considerable economic potential and is attracting attention as a production base for exports to surrounding regions. Türkiye has signed FTAs with over 20 countries and regions, and the need has been recognized for Japan to develop conditions of competition for Japanese companies through the conclusion of an EPA.

In addition, since the business communities of both countries have expressed high expectations for the early conclusion of the Japan-Türkiye EPA, the two countries agreed to start negotiations at the Japan-Türkiye Summit Meeting in January 2014, and 17 rounds of negotiations were held by the end of December 2023.

C Other EPAs that have Entered into Force

The existing EPAs contain provisions concerning the joint committee, which is a body that discusses the implementation of the agreements, and a process to review the agreements after a certain period of time following their entry into force. In addition, a variety of consultations are being held in order to smoothly implement the EPAs after their entry into force. With regard to the Japan-Indonesia EPA, substantial conclusion of negotiations for the amendment of the EPA was confirmed at the Japan-Indonesia Summit Meeting held in December.

In accordance with the EPAs, the Government of Japan has been accepting candidates for nurses and certified care workers from Indonesia, the Philippines, and Viet Nam. In total, 3,949 (as of FY2023) candidates have been accepted from Indonesia, 3,613 from the Philippines, and 1,845 from Viet Nam. From these three countries, the total number of nurses and certified care workers who have passed national exams is 648 and 2,890 individuals, respectively, as of FY2022.

D Investment-related Treaties

Investment-related treaties (Investment agreement and EPA/FTA including investment chapter) constitute an important legal basis to improve predictability for investors and promote investment by establishing common rules for the protection of investors and their investment property, enhancement of transparency in regulations, expansion of investment opportunities, procedures for investment dispute settlement, and other matters. Japan has actively engaged in concluding investment agreements, as these agreements are considered to improve the investment environment for Japanese companies overseas and to attract foreign investment to the Japanese market.

In 2023, the Japan-Angola Investment Agreement was signed in August and the Japan-Bahrain Investment Agreement came into effect in September. As of the end of January 2024, 53 investment-related agreements have entered into force (36 investment agreements and 17 EPAs), and three investment-related agreements have been signed but have not yet entered into force (two investment agreements and one EPA). Altogether, there will be 56 investment-related agreements covering 81 countries and regions. Including investment-related agreements that are currently under negotiation, these investment-related agreements will cover 94 countries/regions and approximately 95% of Japan's outbound direct foreign investment.⁴

E Tax Conventions/Agreements on Social Security

(A) Tax Conventions

Tax conventions are intended to eliminate international double taxation in cross-border economic activities (e.g. to reduce or exempt withholding taxes imposed on investment income such as dividends), or to prevent tax evasion or avoidance, and provide an important legal basis for promoting sound investment and economic exchange between two countries. To support the sound overseas business expansion of Japanese companies, the Government of Japan is working to expand the necessary tax treaty networks, both in terms of quality and quantity.

In 2023, a new tax treaty with Azerbaijan (fully revised) (August) entered into force. Tax treaties with

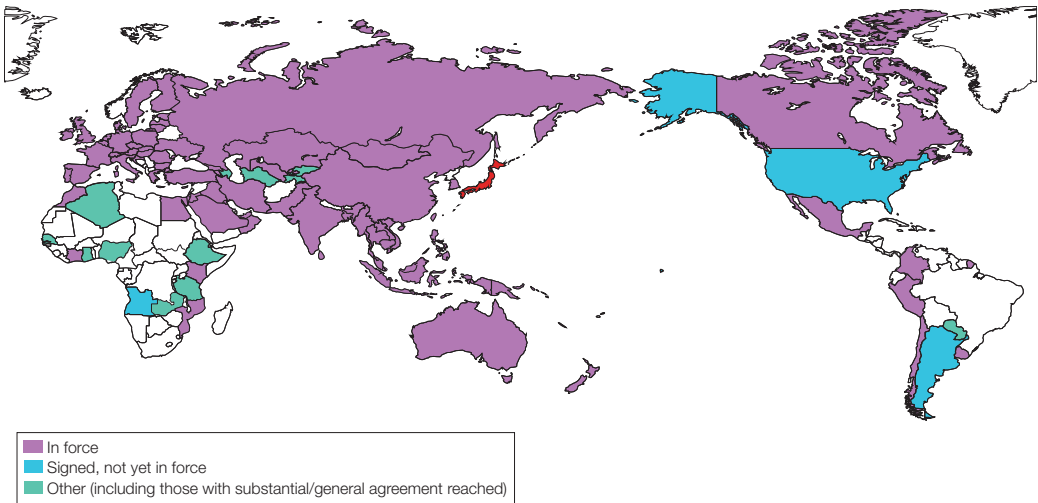
⁴ "Regional balance of Direct Investment (Assets)," Ministry of Finance (All regions) (As of the end of 2022)

Current investment-related agreements (as of the end of January 2024)

Negotiation status of investment-related agreements ^(Note) (Note) EPA/FTA including investment agreements and investment chapter

- In force: 53 (36 investment agreements, 17 EPAs)
- Signed, not yet in force: 3 (2 investment agreements, 1 EPA)
- Under negotiation: 17 agreements (14 investment agreements, 3 EPAs)

Covering 81 countries / regions
Once those under negotiation enter into force
Covering 94 countries / regions



■ In force (terminated agreements excluded)		(¹): year of entry into force (²) denotes treaties with investment liberalization
Investment agreement		
1 Egypt (1978)	19 Myanmar (2014) ⁽¹⁾	
2 Sri Lanka (1982)	20 Mozambique (2014) ⁽¹⁾	
3 China (1989)	21 Colombia (2015) ⁽¹⁾	
4 Türkiye (1993)	22 Kazakhstan (2015)	
5 Hong Kong (1997)	23 Ukraine (2015)	
6 Pakistan (2002)	24 Saudi Arabia (2017)	
7 Bangladesh (1999)	25 Uruguay (2017) ⁽¹⁾	
8 Russia (2000)	26 Iran (2017)	
9 Republic of Korea (2003) ⁽¹⁾	27 Oman (2017)	
10 Viet Nam (2004) ⁽¹⁾	28 Kenya (2017)	
11 Cambodia (2008) ⁽¹⁾	29 Israel (2017) ⁽¹⁾	
12 Laos (2008) ⁽¹⁾	30 Armenia (2019) ⁽¹⁾	
13 Uzbekistan (2009) ⁽¹⁾	31 Jordan (2020)	
14 Peru (2009) ⁽¹⁾	32 United Arab Emirates (2020)	
15 Papua New Guinea (2014)	33 Cote d'Ivoire (2021) ⁽¹⁾	
16 Kuwait (2014) ⁽¹⁾	34 Georgia (2021) ⁽¹⁾	
17 Iraq (2014)	35 Morocco (2022)	
18 Japan, China and Republic of Korea (2014)	36 Bahrain (2023)	
Note: A private investment arrangement with investment liberalization was made between Japan and Taiwan in 2011.		
EPA including investment chapter		
1 Singapore (2002) ⁽¹⁾	12 Mongolia (2016) ⁽¹⁾	
2 Mexico (2005) ⁽¹⁾	13 TPP11 Agreement ^(Note 1) (2018) ⁽¹⁾	
3 Malaysia (2006) ⁽¹⁾	14 EU (2019) ⁽¹⁾	
4 Chile (2007) ⁽¹⁾	15 ASEAN (2020) ^(Note 2) ⁽¹⁾	
5 Thailand (2007) ⁽¹⁾	16 UK (2021) ⁽¹⁾	
6 Brunei (2008) ⁽¹⁾	17 RCEP Agreement ^(Note 3) (2022) ⁽¹⁾	
7 Indonesia (2008) ⁽¹⁾		
8 Philippines (2008) ⁽¹⁾	Note 1: TPP11 Agreement: Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement on Trans-Pacific Partnership	
9 Switzerland (2009) ⁽¹⁾	Note 2: year of entry into force of the Protocol to Amend the Agreement	
10 India (2011) ⁽¹⁾	Note 3: RCEP Agreement: Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement	
11 Australia (2015) ⁽¹⁾		

■ Under negotiation	
Investment agreement	
1 Algeria	8 Nigeria
2 Qatar	9 Zambia
3 Ghana	10 Ethiopia
4 Tanzania	11 Tajikistan
5 Turkmenistan	12 EU
6 Senegal	13 Paraguay
7 Kyrgyz Republic	14 Azerbaijan
EPA/FTA including investment chapter	
1 GCC (negotiations to resume in 2024)	
2 Japan, China, and Republic of Korea	
3 Türkiye	

■ Signed / not in force	
• TPP Agreement ^(Note) (signed February 2016, approved) (EPA) ⁽¹⁾	
• Argentina (signed December 2018, approved) ⁽¹⁾	
• Angola (signed in August 2023, unapproved) ⁽¹⁾	
Note: TPP Agreement denotes Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement	

Algeria (February) and Greece (November) were also signed. In addition, Japan and Turkmenistan agreed in principle on a new tax treaty (fully revised) in October. As of December 2023, Japan has concluded 85 tax treaties applied to 154 economies.

(B) Agreements on Social Security

Agreements on social security aim to resolve the issues of the double payment of social security insurance premiums and pension entitlement. They are expected to facilitate interpersonal exchange and strengthen further bilateral relations, including economic exchange, by reducing the burden on Japanese companies and citizens working overseas. The total number of countries that have concluded or signed such agreements with Japan now stands at 23 as of December 2023.

(2) Initiatives with International Organizations

A World Trade Organization (WTO)

(A) Challenges Facing the WTO and WTO Reform

The WTO has contributed to the economic growth of Japan and the world as the foundation of a rules-based, free and open multilateral trading system. Today, the world faces geopolitical challenges such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine, as well as changes in the global economy such as the development of the digital economy and new challenges such as non-market policies and practices and economic coercion. It is true that the WTO has not been able to adequately address these crises and challenges, and the need for WTO reform has never been more apparent if the multilateral trading system, with the WTO as its core, is to be maintained and strengthened.

Against this backdrop, Japan is promoting international efforts to reform the WTO, which consist of the three pillars: (1) formulating rules in line with the times, (2) reforming the dispute settlement system, and (3) strengthening the function for monitoring and implementation of the WTO Agreements. The G7 Trade Ministers' Meeting in Osaka-Sakai, held in October under Japan's presidency, also reaffirmed the G7's commitment to promote WTO reform and maintain and

strengthen a rules-based, inclusive, free and fair multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core.

(B) Formulation of rules in line with the times

Japan accepted the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies in July 2023, which was adopted during the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in June 2022. The agreement aims to ensure the sustainable use of living marine resources by prohibiting subsidies that facilitate illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, etc. This is the second new agreement created with the participation of all member countries since the establishment of the WTO in 1995, following the Trade Facilitation Agreement. In February, along with urging non-member countries to accede to the agreement as soon as possible, Japan was the first among the member countries to contribute to the agreement's funding in order to promote its implementation by developing countries.

Meanwhile, Japan has been promoting rule-making through groups of like-minded countries under the Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs).⁵ In 2020, negotiations were launched for the preparation of an Agreement on Investment Facilitation for Development. Japan also actively contributed to the discussions, and negotiations on the text of the substantive provisions were concluded in July. The substantive provisions provide for increased transparency of investment-related measures and simplified and expedited licensing procedures. In the JSI negotiation to develop a new agreement on e-commerce, Japan, as a co-convenor along with Australia and Singapore, has been leading discussions toward the conclusion of the negotiations.

(C) Dispute Settlement

The WTO dispute settlement system is aimed at seeking a rules-based settlement of economic disputes arising between WTO Members, whereby providing security and predictability to the multilateral trading system. Since December 2019, the Appellate Body (serving as the final instance) has "ceased to function" due to a failure to (re)appoint its members, falling short of the quorum required to hear an appeal, but the dispute settlement system itself continues to be used by WTO Members.

⁵ JSI: Joint Statement Initiative. Initiative launched at the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference (Argentina) in December 2018 based on a Joint Statement issued by a number of like-minded countries in each of the following four areas: (1) e-commerce, (2) investment facilitation, (3) micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and (4) services domestic regulation

As of December 31, 2023, five cases⁶ to which Japan was one of the parties had been brought to the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism, with the following developments in 2023.

In the case Japan filed in 2019 regarding India's measures to increase tariffs on information and communication technology (ICT) products such as smartphones and parts thereof, a report of the panel (serving as the first instance) was circulated to all WTO Members in April. It concluded that the measures in question were inconsistent with Articles II:1 (a) and (b) of the GATT 1994, recommending India to bring the measures into conformity with its obligations under those provisions. As India appealed the panel report to the Appellate Body in May, which has been dysfunctional, no deliberations are currently taking place.

In the case of Japan's complaint filed in 2021 against China's anti-dumping measures on Japanese stainless steel products, a panel report was circulated to all WTO Members in June. It concluded that the measures in question were inconsistent with the Anti-Dumping Agreement, recommending China to bring the measures into conformity with its obligations under that agreement. The panel report was adopted by the WTO Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) in July. In October, Japan and China also notified the DSB that they had agreed that the reasonable period of time for China to implement the DSB's recommendation should expire on 8 May 2024.

In the case the ROK filed in 2019 regarding Japan's review⁷ of its export control operations for the ROK, the ROK withdrew its complaint in March.

In response to the difficulty in obtaining final decisions on individual disputes due to the suspension of the functions of the Appellate Body, in March Japan joined the Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA), which was launched by like-minded WTO Members in 2020 as an interim mechanism to substitute the functions of the Appellate Body. The MPIA will enhance the predictability of the WTO dispute settlement system by allowing for a final decision on disputes among participating members and

thereby contribute to the maintenance and strengthening of the rules-based multilateral trading system.⁸

Meanwhile, Japan has been actively participating in discussions on reforming the dispute settlement system in order to achieve reforms that will contribute to a long-lasting solution to the problems faced by the Appellate Body, and has continued to lead efforts toward reform in cooperation with other members since joining the MPIA.

(D) Toward the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13)

With the goal of achieving concrete results at MC13 in February 2024, in addition to efforts at the WTO, Japan took advantage of opportunities such as the G7 Trade Ministers' Meetings in Osaka-Sakai in April and October, the G20 Trade and Investment Minister's Meeting in August, and the APEC Ministerial Meeting in November to lead discussions at MC13 and call for close cooperation among countries.

B Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

(A) Features

The OECD is an international organization with 38 member countries with shared values for the purpose of economic growth, development assistance, and the expansion of free, multilateral trade. The OECD conducts research and analysis on a wide range of economic and social areas and makes specific policy recommendations.

Through discussions held by approximately 30 committees, it has formed international standards and rules. Since its accession to the OECD in 1964, Japan has been actively engaged in OECD initiatives through discussions at various committees as well as financial and human resources contributions.

(B) 2023 OECD Ministerial Council Meeting

The 2023 Ministerial Council Meeting was held on June 7 and 8 in Paris, France, under the chairmanship of the UK and the vice-chairmanships of Costa Rica and New

⁶ In addition to the respective cases with India and China mentioned in the main text, there are cases related to safeguard measures on steel products by India, anti-dumping measures on stainless steel bars by the ROK, and support measures by the ROK for its shipbuilding industry.

⁷ With regard to the export of fluorinated polyimides, resists, and hydrogen fluoride to the ROK and the transfer of associated manufacturing technologies (including those associated with the export of manufacturing equipment), the decision was made to have them removed from the comprehensive export license system and switch to a system requiring individual export license applications.

⁸ MPIA participants make a political commitment to not petition the Appellate Body for WTO-related disputes between participating countries and instead engage under the WTO Agreements (52 participating countries and regions as of the end of December 2023).

Zealand, with the theme “Securing a Resilient Future: Shared Values and Global Partnerships.” Among those attending in person from Japan were State Minister for Foreign Affairs YAMADA Kenji and State Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry NAKATANI Shinichi. State Minister Yamada outlined the discussions at the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, demonstrated the unwavering solidarity between the G7 and Ukraine, and stated Japan’s determination to strongly support Ukraine’s recovery and reconstruction with full backing of the Japanese public and private sectors. State Minister Yamada also stated Japan’s position and efforts regarding the OECD’s outreach to Southeast Asia and building resilient supply chains, and stressed the importance of disseminating and promoting the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, which is now more fit for purpose in light of up-to-date issues such as the environment, digitalization, and human rights.

During the closing session, a Ministerial Council Statement was adopted based on each country’s position and views on various issues, including support for Ukraine, outreach to Southeast Asia, climate change, and digitalization. The outcome documents such as the OECD Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific and the updated OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises were adopted.

At the end of the meeting, State Minister Yamada announced Japan’s intention for assuming the chairmanship of the OECD Ministerial Council in 2024, marking the 60th anniversary of Japan’s OECD membership.

(C) Initiatives in Various Sectors

The OECD plays an important role in shaping rules and standards in the economic and social spheres, as well as in promoting these rules and standards in emerging economies through deepening cooperation with other international fora such as the G20, G7, and APEC. Its initiatives include leading discussions on reviewing the international taxation system, revising principles on AI and corporate governance, disseminating and implementing the G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment,⁹ and engaging in aid coordination.

(D) Outreach to Southeast Asia

With the growing significance of the Indo-Pacific region in the global economy, it is an important task for the OECD to strengthen relations with Indonesia and other emerging economies in Southeast Asia and to promote the OECD standards. In this context, the OECD has been working to strengthen relations with the region, engaging in policy dialogues and other activities through the Southeast Asia Regional Programme (SEARP), and in July, Indonesia became the first Southeast Asian country to announce its intention to join the OECD. In October, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUJI Kiyoto attended the OECD Southeast Asia Ministerial Forum in Hanoi (Viet Nam) in person. State Minister Tsuji stated that the OECD’s outreach to Southeast Asia is aimed at maintaining and strengthening a free and open economic order based on the rule of law, and Japan shares this philosophy. State Minister Tsuji also stated that the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) emphasizes the principles of openness, transparency, inclusivity, and respect for international law, and the promotion of the AOIP and OECD international standards will attract private investment to the ASEAN region, leading to sustainable economic growth.

Japan will continue to encourage future OECD membership from the Southeast Asian region, utilizing the OECD Tokyo Centre and the technical cooperation of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).



State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji speaking at the OECD Southeast Asia Ministerial Forum (October 26, Hanoi, Viet Nam)

⁹ Endorsed at the G20 Osaka Summit in June 2019, the Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment include elements such as openness, transparency, economic efficiency, and debt sustainability

(E) Contributions in Terms of Financial and Human Resources

As of 2023, Japan was the second largest financial contributor to the OECD, covering 9.0 % of the OECD's mandatory contributions (the U.S. is first, covering 19.1 %). Moreover, Japanese nationals have successfully served as one of the Deputy Secretary Generals (there are four positions in total; currently Deputy Secretary General TAKEUCHI Yoshiki), and 85 Japanese staff work at the OECD Secretariat as of the end of 2022.

(3) Intellectual Property Protection

Strengthening the protection of intellectual property is crucial to promoting technological innovation and achieving economic growth. Japan is contributing to the strengthening of international collaboration through multilateral discussions at APEC, the WTO (TRIPS),¹⁰ and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). In addition, Japan is working to improve an environment for ensuring that the Japanese intellectual property is appropriately protected and utilized both domestically and internationally through means such as establishing provisions for the protection and promotion of the use of intellectual property in economic partnership agreements that include the CPTPP, RCEP Agreement, Japan-EU EPA, and Japan-UK EPA.

At the same time, in order to provide prompt and effective support to Japanese companies facing increasingly serious intellectual property issues such as counterfeit and pirated products, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has appointed Intellectual Property Officers at almost all diplomatic establishments overseas to serve as liaisons for Japanese companies, collect local information, consider countermeasures, and liaise with counterpart governments and other relevant parties. In addition, meetings are held for these officers to exchange information on the extent of the damage in each region and country, and to share the response status and knowledge of diplomatic establishments overseas to strengthen the system for handling intellectual property right infringements. In 2023, such meeting was held for the Southwest Asia region.

3 Leading Discussions at International Conferences**(1) G7**

Japan held the G7 presidency for 2023 as the international community stood at a historic turning point, facing multiple crises including the climate crisis, the spread of COVID-19, and Russia's aggression against Ukraine (See the Opening Special Feature on page 2).

On February 24, one year after the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Prime Minister Kishida hosted the G7 Leaders' Video Conference. Opening remarks were made by President Zelensky of Ukraine, followed by discussions among G7 leaders, who concurred that G7's solidarity will never waver in standing with Ukraine, in supporting countries and people in need and in upholding the international order based on the rule of law.

Prime Minister Kishida hosted the G7 Hiroshima Summit from May 19 to 21.¹¹ At the meeting, G7 leaders affirmed that they will make active and concrete contributions under the broad theme of realizing an international community characterized by cooperation, not division and confrontation, and with the two pillars of upholding the free and open international order based on the rule of law and strengthening outreach with international partners beyond the G7.

President Zelensky also attended the meeting. On the situation in Ukraine, G7 leaders affirmed that they will continue to impose severe sanctions against Russia and strongly support Ukraine, stressing that peace cannot be achieved without the withdrawal of Russian troops, and reaffirming that they will make every effort to bring peace to Ukraine. G7 leaders issued the G7 Leaders' Statement on Ukraine.

Regarding diplomacy and security, Prime Minister Kishida stated that any unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force is unacceptable anywhere in the world, and that it is essential to show the G7's strong will to uphold the free and open international order based on the rule of law. On the Indo-Pacific situation,

¹⁰ TRIPS Agreement: Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights

¹¹ For details about the G7 Hiroshima Summit, including the outcome document, see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: https://www.mofa.go.jp/ms/g7/hs_s/page1c_000666.html



G7 leaders also reaffirmed that they will continue to work closely together in responding to issues related to China as well as North Korea, including nuclear and missile issues and abductions issue.

Regarding nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, G7 leaders had candid discussions that touched on the reality of the atomic bombing in Hiroshima, and affirmed their commitment to a “world without nuclear weapons.” The G7 leaders issued the “G7 Leaders’ Hiroshima Vision,” the first independent G7 Summit document on nuclear disarmament.

In response to the rapidly growing importance of addressing economic security challenges, the G7 established an independent session on economic security for the first time at a G7 Summit, and had candid discussions. G7 leaders issued the “G7 Leaders’ Statement on Economic Resilience and Economic Security,” the first independent G7 Summit statement, as a comprehensive and concrete message on this issue.

They also shared an intention to have discussions held as soon as possible through the “Hiroshima AI Process” about generative AI, a rapidly evolving technology, among the relevant ministers and have the results of those discussions reported by the end of 2023.

The G7 leaders, together with invited countries and organizations, discussed various issues facing the international community, including food, development, health, climate change and energy, and the environment, and reaffirmed the importance of working with developing and emerging countries, called the Global South, to address these issues.

At the end of the meeting, the leaders of the G7, the invited countries, and Ukraine discussed global peace and stability and shared a recognition of the importance of UN Charter principles such as the rule of law, sovereignty, and respect for territorial integrity.

In summing up their discussions, G7 leaders issued the “Clean Energy Economy Action Plan” in addition to the “G7 Hiroshima Leaders’ Communiqué,” the aforementioned “G7 Leaders’ Statement on Ukraine,” the “G7 Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament,” and the “G7 Leaders’ Statement on Economic Resilience

and Economic Security,” and, in collaboration with the leaders of invited countries, issued the “Hiroshima Action Statement for Resilient Global Food Security.”

Also in December, Prime Minister Kishida hosted the G7 Leaders’ Video Conference to conclude the year of Japan’s G7 Presidency.¹² With President Zelensky joining at the opening, the meeting saw G7 leaders reaffirm the unwavering solidarity of the G7 with Ukraine and concur on remaining united and strongly promoting sanctions against Russia while providing support for Ukraine.

Regarding the situation in the Middle East, G7 leaders condemned the terror attacks by Hamas and others, demanded the immediate release of all hostages, and spoke of the importance of improving the humanitarian situation in the region. G7 leaders confirmed that the G7 will continue to take the lead in calming down the situation and providing assistance to the people.

On AI, G7 leaders welcomed the “Hiroshima AI Process Comprehensive Policy Framework” as agreed by the G7, which comprehensively sets out the rules to be followed by the relevant actors for the first time globally, and agreed on expanding these outcomes to the international community at large.

G7 leaders reviewed the initiatives under the Japanese Presidency, including the G7 Hiroshima Summit, and confirmed that they will further deepen cooperation under the Italian Presidency in 2024, then issued the “G7 Leaders’ Statement” after the meeting.

A total of seven G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting were held in 2023, including five in-person and two online. At the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Karuizawa, Nagano, held April 16-18 and chaired by Foreign Minister Hayashi, the G7 foreign ministers confirmed their collaboration for the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May. In addition, for the first time as the G7, the G7 foreign ministers issued a G7 Foreign Ministers’ Communiqué as the outcome of the meeting, confirming in written form their commitment to a free and open international order based on the rule of law, which Japan values, and their strong opposition to any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo anywhere

¹² See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website for details about the G7 Leaders’ Video Conference, including the outcome document: https://www.mofa.go.jp/ecm/ec/pageite_000001_00031.html



in the world. At the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Tokyo on November 7 and 8 and chaired by Foreign Minister Kamikawa, the G7 Foreign Ministers held candid and in-depth discussions on the situation in the Middle East in particular and put together a comprehensive message in the form of a document. Regarding the situation in Ukraine, the G7 confirmed that, even given the current international situation, it will maintain its stance of strict sanctions against Russia and strong support for Ukraine. The Indo-Pacific, which is the most strategically important area under the Japanese Presidency, was also discussed.

The first G7 Trade Ministers' Meeting was held online on April 4, and the second meeting was held in Osaka-Sakai on October 28 and 29, attended by Foreign Minister Hayashi and Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry NISHIMURA Yasutoshi and by Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Nishimura, respectively. The G7 trade ministers candidly discussed economic coercion and supply chain resilience from the perspective of economic security, as well as the maintenance and strengthening of a free and fair trade regime with the WTO at its core, and adopted a G7 Trade Ministers' Statement.

(2) G20

The G20 is the premier forum for international economic cooperation participated in by both major developed and emerging countries. At the G20 New Delhi Summit held on September 9 and 10, discussions were held under the theme of "One Earth, One Family, One Future" set forth by India, the G20 Presidency.

Prime Minister Kishida emphasized the importance of achieving a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, and, based on the idea that the outcome of the G7 should feed into the G20, he communicated Japan's position and initiatives on key issues such as food security, climate and energy, development, health, and digitalization.

Especially regarding food security, Prime Minister Kishida expressed his intention to work toward building a sustainable and resilient agriculture and food system, while introducing that at the G7 Hiroshima Summit a concrete action plan was formulated with the participation of invited countries, which confirmed the importance of G20's efforts to enhance data gathering,

and the "Millet and other ancient grains international research initiative (MAHARISHI)," promoted by India. On the subject of health, Prime Minister Kishida stated that he attaches importance to achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC), in which all people can receive basic health services when they are needed and at a cost they can afford, and the strengthening of prevention, preparedness, and response (PPR) for a possible next health crisis, including the provision of prompt and efficient funding in times of crisis. In particular, he emphasized the importance of strengthening the delivery of medical countermeasures (MCM), which was launched at the G7 Hiroshima Summit and of which its importance was confirmed at this G20 Summit.

The G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, agreed upon by all members including Russia, was issued as the summary of the discussions. It included commitments based on the outcomes of the G7 Hiroshima Summit in the areas of food, climate change and energy, environment, and health, as well as reference to a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in Ukraine and adherence to the principles of the UN Charter, including territorial integrity and sovereignty.

In addition, at the invitation of India, the G20 Presidency, the G20 Leaders' Video Conference was held on November 22 that Prime Minister Kishida attended. At the meeting, G20 leaders discussed key issues such as multilateral reforms, climate change, digital, and women-led development. Prime Minister Kishida emphasized that in addressing various challenges facing the international community, the G20 should aim for a world where "human dignity" is protected, and explained Japan's position and initiatives on issues such as reform of multilateral systems such as the UN and multilateral development banks (MDBs), climate change, AI, and women-led development.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Yamada attended the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in New Delhi on March 2, where important issues such as strengthening multilateralism, food and energy security, and development cooperation were discussed. State Minister Yamada, emphasized that Japan, as the G7 presidency, intends to exercise leadership in resolving various issues facing the international community, and will also work with the G20.

(3) Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

APEC is a framework of economic cooperation in which 21 economies (countries and regions) in the Asia-Pacific region participate. The Asia-Pacific region is the “world’s growth center,” accounting for about 40% of the world’s population, about 50% of the world’s trade volume, and about 60% of the world’s total GDP. APEC conducts activities such as promoting regional economic integration and enhancing economic and technical cooperation to liberalize and facilitate trade and investment in the region. The Asia-Pacific region, which thrives by liberalizing and facilitating trade and investment and strengthening connectivity in accordance with international rules, is the core of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” that Japan has been promoting.

Japan’s active involvement in and promotion of cooperation with APEC is of great significance to support our own economic growth and the overseas expansion of Japanese companies.

In 2023, APEC was hosted by the U.S. under the overall theme “Creating a Resilient and Sustainable Future for All,” with three policy priorities: “interconnected, innovative, and inclusive”, and discussions were held at various meetings throughout the year. Among other subjects, discussions were advanced on cooperation in line with the “Bangkok Goals on Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy,” endorsed at the previous year’s APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting, which stated initiatives for sustainable growth in the APEC region and on the realization of an “open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful Asia-Pacific Community” as outlined in the “APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040” endorsed at the APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting in 2020.

At the APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting held in San Francisco, U.S., on November 16 and 17, the leaders endorsed the “Golden Gate Declaration” as a Leaders’ Declaration, which clearly stated the importance of the multilateral trading system based on free and fair rules, the commitment to WTO reform, and cooperation to facilitate flow of data. In addition to the Leaders’ Declaration, a Chair’s Statement on the situation in Ukraine and the Middle East was issued by the U.S.. Regarding Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, Prime Minister Kishida reiterated that the use or threat

of use of nuclear weapon is inadmissible that was also reflected in the Chair’s Statement.

At the Leaders’ Meeting, Prime Minister Kishida emphasized the growing importance of APEC cooperation at a time when the international community is facing complex challenges, and stressed that ensuring a fair and transparent trade and investment environment is essential for inclusive and resilient growth in the region. He also stressed the importance of advancing the efforts of the Hiroshima AI Process beyond the G7 and “Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT)” in promoting the digital economy. Prime Minister Kishida also asserted the importance of energy transition through various and realistic pathways to achieve decarbonization, and expressed Japan’s willingness to contribute in various ways for the sustainable growth of the region. Peru will host APEC in 2024.

4 Support for overseas expansion of Japanese companies (including promotion of exports of Japanese agricultural, forestry, and fishery products and Japanese food products)

(1) Promotion of Japanese Companies’ Overseas Business Expansion by MOFA and Accompanying Diplomatic Missions Overseas

The number of Japanese companies operating overseas has been increasing over the medium- to long-term despite being affected by domestic and overseas economic conditions and other circumstances. One of the reasons behind this is that many Japanese companies, which underpin Japan’s economic development, have embarked more actively than ever before on overseas expansion with the aim of further cultivating foreign markets. There is considerable momentum behind economic growth abroad, mainly in Asia. To capture this for the Japanese economy, it is becoming increasingly important for the Government to support Japanese companies.

In light of the situation, MOFA, in coordination with diplomatic missions overseas, has been engaged

in supporting Japanese companies in their efforts to expand their businesses overseas. At the diplomatic missions overseas, all staff, including those responsible for Japanese business support, provide Japanese companies with information while lobbying foreign governments under the leadership of ambassadors and consuls-general. Under the motto of being “open and responsive government offices,” these missions aim to provide specific support that corresponds with the conditions in that respective region.

In addition, seminars and legal consultations concerning local legal systems were held at 23 diplomatic missions in 16 countries in FY2023, mainly in Asia and Africa. In August 2022, the Global Business Investment Support Office was established in the Cabinet Secretariat to promote the planning of measures and coordination with related ministries and agencies to support overseas business investment by Japanese companies, and MOFA is actively contributing to these activities.

In addition to consultations about business problems, another important function performed by diplomatic missions overseas for Japanese companies is the promotion and publicity of the “Japan Brand” for products, technologies and services, as well as for agricultural, forestry and fishery products from Japanese companies at receptions to celebrate the Emperor’s birthday and various other events and exhibitions. These missions have conducted a wide range of public relations activities by actively providing embassies and ambassador’s residences as venues for product exhibitions of Japanese companies, product exhibitions and tasting events by local governments, and other events to promote and publicize Japanese products and commodities, and as venues for business development seminars and exchange events with local companies and related institutions.

(2) Promotion of the Japanese Infrastructure System in Overseas Business Expansion

To capture infrastructure demand, especially from emerging economies, and to promote overseas deployment of infrastructure systems by Japanese companies, the Ministerial Meeting on Strategy relating to Infrastructure Export and Economic Cooperation,

chaired by the Chief Cabinet Secretary and comprising relevant cabinet ministers, was established in 2013, and 56 meetings were held by December 2023. This organization has been annually revising and following up on the “Infrastructure System Export Strategy” formulated in 2013, and in December 2020, in light of recent changes surrounding infrastructure systems, the “Infrastructure System Overseas Promotion Strategy 2025” (hereinafter referred to as the “New Strategy”) was released. The goal of the New Strategy is to achieve 34 trillion Japanese yen in orders for infrastructure systems in 2025 based on the three pillars: (1) achieve economic growth, (2) contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and (3) realize a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).” In June 2023, the Government of Japan formulated a supplement to the new strategy and, in light of changes in the environment surrounding overseas infrastructure development, laid out concrete initiatives for three priority strategies: (a) strengthening the response to digital transformation (DX) and other changes in a new age, (b) accelerating the transition toward a decarbonized society, and (c) promoting partnerships based on the FOIP. MOFA is promoting these efforts together with related ministries and agencies.

With regard to diplomatic missions overseas, MOFA has been appointing “Officers in Charge of Infrastructure Projects” to gather and consolidate information on infrastructure projects (approximately 200 personnel at 101 diplomatic missions overseas in 79 countries as of the end of December 2023). This initiative has also shown results.

(3) Promotion of the Export of Japanese Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Products and Food (Removal of Import Restrictions on Japanese Food Products after the Great East Japan Earthquake)

Expanding exports of Japan’s agricultural, forestry, fishery and food products is a major objective of the Government of Japan. The Strategy to Realize Export Expansion of Agricultural, Forestry, Fishery and Food Products was formulated in December 2022 to further promote concerted efforts by the Government of Japan. The strategy calls for developing exporting

regions and business operators in order to achieve two trillion Japanese yen by 2025 and five trillion Japanese yen by 2030 of agricultural, forestry, fishery, and food product exports. As part of efforts to accelerate initiatives to further expand exports, the strategy was revised at the end of 2021, the year in which exports exceeded one trillion Japanese yen, as well as in June 2022 and December 2022. MOFA is also working with related ministries and agencies, Japanese companies, and local governments to expand exports. In particular, Japanese business support officers (in charge of the food industry) have been assigned to 61 diplomatic missions in 56 countries and regions to strengthen initiatives to promote the export of agricultural, forestry, and fishery products and food. In addition, MOFA is actively promoting the attractiveness of Japanese agricultural, forestry, and fishery products and food products through its network of diplomatic missions overseas and by utilizing social media and other means, as well as by seizing various opportunities such as receptions and cultural events to which dignitaries from various countries and regions are invited. As one measure to strengthen the functions of its diplomatic missions overseas, since 2022 MOFA has been assigning advisors familiar with local conditions to missions in countries and regions with large export value to promote the export of agricultural, forestry, and fishery products, as well as food products. In addition, Japan Food Export Platforms, consisting of diplomatic missions overseas, the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) overseas offices, and other organizations, make use of their local presence to provide useful local information to domestic businesses, product groups, and prefectures, and serve as a hub connecting these parties and overseas businesses, as well as an organization that plans various promotional activities by a concerted national effort.

One of the biggest barriers to increasing exports is import restrictions on Japanese agricultural, forestry and fishery products and food by countries and regions following the Great East Japan Earthquake and TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station accident. Completely eliminating these restrictions and addressing Japan's reputational damage are top

priorities for the Government of Japan, MOFA has been making efforts in collaboration with relevant ministries and agencies to have these restrictions lifted as quickly as possible. As a result of these efforts, the EU, Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein lifted their import restrictions in August, bringing the total to 48 countries and regions.

Meanwhile, as of the end of 2023, seven countries and regions still maintain regulations, especially China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Russia, which tightened their measures following the release of ALPS treated water in August (See Chapter 3, Section 1, 4 (3) C) (regulations including import suspension: the ROK, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Russia; limited regulations: French Polynesia). At the WTO, Japan has consistently and strongly urged China and other countries and regions to immediately repeal their measures, and has requested discussions with those countries and regions based on the SPS Agreement,¹³ while explaining its position at meetings with the relevant WTO committees. Furthermore, in accordance with the provisions of the RCEP Agreement to which both Japan and China are Parties, Japan has requested discussions with the Chinese government and has asked China to engage in the discussions in accordance with its obligations under the Agreement. MOFA will closely work with the relevant ministries, agencies, local governments and international organizations and will continue taking every opportunity and making every effort to persistently explain and appeal to these countries and regions, with the goal of having restrictions promptly removed and reputational damage repaired based on scientific evidence.

¹³ SPS Agreement: Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

5 Promoting Resource Diplomacy along with Foreign Direct Investment in Japan

(1) Securing a Stable Supply of Energy and Mineral Resources at Reasonable Prices

A The Current Situation Concerning Energy and Mineral Resources in Japan and Abroad

(A) Situation in the World

Structural changes in recent years have been seen in the international energy market with respect to three areas: (1) demand (consumption), (2) supply (production), and (3) resource selection. Regarding (1) demand, global demand for primary energy has shifted towards non-OECD member countries, primarily China and India. With respect to (2) supply, the U.S. became the world's largest producer of both oil and natural gas due to the "Shale Revolution,"¹⁴ and liberalization of export controls on crude oil in December 2015. The U.S. is promoting energy export policies such as further exports of the U.S. liquefied natural gas (LNG). As for (3) resource selection, based on the fact that production and usage on energy account for about two-thirds of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the transitions to cleaner energy resources such as renewable energy are accelerating. In addition, since the Paris Agreement on climate change was adopted in December 2015, companies have made their efforts to further advance towards low-carbonization. In 2021, numerous countries have announced goals to achieve carbon neutrality in the second half of the century, an indication of increasing momentum for decarbonization worldwide. Energy prices, which had been on an upward trajectory since 2021, experienced significant volatility in 2022 amid the energy crisis caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The international community faces the dual challenges of how to stabilize energy markets and achieve decarbonization.

(B) Situation in Japan

Since the Great East Japan Earthquake, the percentage of fossil fuels out of power generation in Japan has reached about 90% in 2012, up from about 60% before the earthquake, due to the shutdown of nuclear power plants. Japan's primary energy self-sufficiency ratio (including nuclear power), which relies on imports from overseas for almost all of its oil, natural gas, coal and other energy resources, dropped sharply from 20% before the 2011 earthquake to 6.3% in 2014. It remains at a low level compared to other OECD countries despite a recovery to 12.1% in 2019. Approximately 90% of Japan's oil imports come from Middle Eastern countries. With regard to LNG and coal, Japan depends less on the Middle East than for oil but almost completely on Asia and Oceania. Under the circumstances, efforts to secure a stable supply of energy at reasonable prices are becoming increasingly important. At the same time, climate change response measures are also important. In October 2020, the Government of Japan announced its intention to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, and in April 2021 pledged to achieve a 46% emissions reduction by FY2030 and announced its new reduction goal to continue making further efforts to realize a 50% reduction. Against this backdrop, the Sixth Strategic Energy Plan, approved by the Cabinet in October 2021, lays out specific measures to be taken by 2030 with a continued focus on the principle of "3E+S," which emphasizes energy source safety (Safety), ensuring of a stable energy supply (Energy Security), the economic efficiency of energy costs (Economic Efficiency), and environmental suitability from the point of view of climate and other elements (Environment).

B Diplomatic Efforts to Secure a Stable Supply of Energy and Mineral Resources at Reasonable Prices

Securing a stable supply of energy and mineral resources at reasonable prices are the foundation for a vital Japanese economy and the livelihoods of its people. MOFA has been strengthening diplomatic efforts with a focus on the following activities.

¹⁴ Shale Revolution: The development in the late 2000s of new technologies for drilling for oil and natural gas contained in layers of rock known as shale in the U.S., and the ability to do so at an economical cost, has led to a significant increase in U.S. oil and natural gas production, affecting many aspects of international affairs.

(A) Gathering and Analysis of Resource-Related Information at Diplomatic Missions Overseas

In order to focus on the acquisition and stable supply of energy and mineral resources, and with a view to strengthening function of diplomatic missions overseas, “Special Assistants for Natural Resources” have been assigned to 60 diplomatic missions in a total of 53 countries as of the end of 2023. MOFA also calls for “Strategy Meetings on Natural Resources” every year, which bring together officials working at diplomatic missions overseas to ensure a stable supply of energy and mineral resources.

(B) Efforts for Energy Market Stabilization

Russia’s aggression against Ukraine that began in February 2022 caused energy prices to soar, with oil prices exceeding 130 U.S. dollars per barrel and European gas market prices rising above 70 U.S. dollars per million BTU. This greatly destabilized the energy market.

Amidst this situation, in February and March, Japan diverted to Europe a portion of the LNG handled by Japanese companies in order to alleviate the tight supply and demand of natural gas in Europe. In addition, as a member of the International Energy Agency (IEA), Japan conducted two collective releases of oil reserves from March to April, releasing a total of 22.5 million barrels of petroleum reserves, the largest amount ever.

Amidst this situation surrounding energy, Japan is also encouraging resource-producing countries to increase their production in order to stabilize the energy market. In April 2023, Foreign Minister Hayashi had a telephone call with Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia. In July, Prime Minister Kishida held meetings with Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed of Saudi Arabia and the President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. In September, Foreign Minister Hayashi once again met with Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal. In September, Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with special envoy for Japan and Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology Sultan Al Jaber of the UAE, while Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia. In addition to urging oil-producing countries by taking the opportunity to have

successive summit and ministerial-level meetings with them, Japan has also urged these countries at various levels through its diplomatic missions overseas as well as relevant ministries and agencies.

(C) Cooperation with International Organizations Related to Energy and Mineral Resources

Japan makes active use of international fora and rules to coordinate and collaborate internationally towards achieving a stable energy supply and enhancing the resilience of supply chains for critical mineral resources. To ensure energy security and achieve realistic energy transitions toward decarbonization, Japan also communicates to the international community the importance of securing a stable energy supply and diversifying supply sources, as well as securing a stable supply of the critical mineral resources essential for achieving energy transitions.

In January, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs TAKAGI Kei attended the 13th session of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Assembly (Abu Dhabi, the UAE), where he stressed that renewable energy is the most important option for ensuring energy security, and noted that efforts should be made to pursue the realization of a decarbonized society on a global scale through realistic energy transitions based on the circumstances of each country and region. He pointed out the need to create fair and effective rules such as “Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)” standards, citing supply chain issues for renewable energy manufacturing and the critical mineral resources needed for it, as well as the disposal of renewable energy manufacturing, as challenges to overcome in achieving a decarbonized society globally. He also expressed a desire to address these challenges at IRENA and work with member countries to resolve them in a coordinated manner.

In July, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Takagi attended the G20 Energy Transitions Ministers’ Meeting, which was held under India’s presidency. At the meeting, Mr. Takagi spoke on the subject of energy access, stating that he believed that access to affordable energy is a basic human need. He also explained the outcomes of the G7 Hiroshima Summit and stated that Japan would promote cooperation with the G20 on the state of energy access during the energy transition.

In September, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs KOMURA Masahiro attended the IEA Critical Minerals and Clean Energy Summit (Paris, France), where he noted that adherence to high ESG standards, greater ESG investment, and increased market transparency are necessary to secure stable supplies of critical minerals. He also stated that concerted action by the international community will be required, and he expressed Japan's intention to continue deepening cooperation with partners worldwide.

In October, Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Ono attended a Vice Ministerial Meeting of the Mineral Security Partnership (MSP) (London, UK). While noting the outcomes of the G7 Hiroshima Summit in the area of critical minerals, he pointed out the need for international support to promote high ESG standards and indicated that Japan would strengthen cooperation with MSP member countries and resource-rich countries.

(D) Strategy Meeting on Diplomatic Missions Overseas Concerning Energy and Mineral Resources

Every year since FY2009, MOFA has held meetings attended by embassies and consulates-general established in major resource-producing countries, relevant ministries, agencies and organizations, experts, and representatives from companies. These meetings have provided opportunities to discuss diplomatic initiatives for ensuring a stable supply of energy and mineral resources in Japan, formulate policy, and strengthen cooperation.

(E) Agreement in Principle on the Negotiations Concerning the Modernization of the Energy Charter Treaty

The Energy Charter Treaty (ECT)¹⁵ is a multilateral treaty that entered into force in April 1998 (entered into force with Japan in 2002). It was established as a legal framework for implementing the European Energy Charter, which called for promoting improvements based on market principles in the energy sector in the

former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe following the collapse of the Soviet Union, as well as promoting trade and investment activities in the global energy sector. This treaty has been signed by 49 countries and organizations mostly located in Europe and Central Asia (as of January 2024). Discussions for revision of the ECT began in 2020, and an agreement in principle was reached among the parties to the negotiations in June 2022. Japan has contributed to the development of the ECT as the largest contributor of assessed donations. This includes serving as chair for the first Meeting of the Energy Charter Conference in East Asia, which was held in 2016, and hosting the 27th Meeting in Tokyo. Furthermore, in September 2021, HIROSE Atsuko became the first Japanese national to become the Deputy Secretary General of the Energy Charter Secretariat, the administrative body for the ECT.

(F) Efforts in the Public Relations Field Related to Energy and Mineral Resources

In January, MOFA hosted an in-person seminar titled "The Energy Crisis: Decarbonization and Geopolitics." The seminar featured a keynote address by IEA Chief Energy Economist Tim Gould, as well as a lively discussion on energy security, decarbonization, and geopolitical risk with panelists including leading academics and representatives from the media and business worlds.

(2) Ensuring Food Security

The global food security situation has deteriorated rapidly and on a global scale, especially in Africa and the Middle East, due to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. This comes at a time when the multiple risks including COVID-19, rising energy prices, climate change, and conflicts are impacting agriculture and food systems, causing supply chain destabilization and disruptions. There also exist many challenges to building sustainable and resilient agriculture and food systems, including how to best use land for food production, conduct agricultural production adapted to climate change, and make efficient use of fertilizers.

¹⁵ The ECT prescribes the liberalization of the trade and transit of energy source materials and commodities, the protection of investments in the energy sector, and other matters. It ensures a stable supply of energy from supply countries to demand countries, contributes to improving energy security for Japan, which largely relies on other countries for energy resources, and provides an important legal foundation for further improving the investment environment for Japanese companies overseas.

According to the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2023,¹⁶ the economic recovery from the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic is estimated to have reduced the undernourished population in 2022 by about 3.8 million people from the previous year to about 735 million people, or about 8% of the world's population. However, the report also states that the increase in food and energy prices caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine is undoubtedly a factor hindering further improvement in this area.

A Cooperation in International Frameworks Concerning Food Security

In response to this global food crisis, Japan, holding the G7 presidency in 2023, has made food security one of its priorities, centering its approach on ensuring affordable access to safe and nutritious food for each and every human being. At the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, Japan, together with the G7 countries and invited countries (Australia, Brazil, Comoros, Cook Islands, India, Indonesia, the ROK, and Viet Nam), issued the Hiroshima Action Statement for Resilient Global Food Security. The statement comprehensively outlines responses to the urgent issues related to food security crisis as well as medium- to long-term actions to build a resilient global agriculture and food system.

In June, in light of the Hiroshima Action Statement, Japan co-hosted the “Dialogue on the Food Security Crisis between Food Exporting and Importing Countries” with the International Grains Council (IGC). With broad participation from governments, international organizations, and the private sector, there were discussions on actions that should be taken by market actors, including exporting and importing countries, during a food security crisis to prevent the situation from becoming worse. The results of this dialogue were compiled into the “Key Principles of Action on Food Security Crises for Exporters and Importers.” In addition, through various international frameworks such as the G20 and APEC, Japan has actively participated in discussions on efforts to ensure food security and build a sustainable and resilient agriculture and food system.

B Main Initiatives in which Japan Participates

On August 3, at the initiative of the U.S., the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) held an open debate on famine and conflict-induced global food insecurity at the UN Headquarters in New York, with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Yamada in attendance. During the meeting, Japan emphasized that addressing famine and conflict-induced food insecurity requires not only short-term efforts such as emergency food assistance, but also medium- and long-term actions based on the concept of human security, such as strengthening the resilience of food systems. Japan also stressed that efforts to prevent conflicts, which are root causes of food insecurity, are important, and should be addressed in a comprehensive manner through the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus approach.

C Strengthen Collaboration with International Organizations on Food Security

As a responsible member of the international community, Japan supports the activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), a specialized agency of the UN in the fields of food and agriculture. Japan, a major donor to the FAO and the third largest contributor of assessed contributions, significantly contributes to strengthening global food security through efforts such as providing development assistance in areas of food and agriculture, and creating international rules that include food safety standards. Japan also works to strengthen relations with the FAO through annual strategic consultations and other means.

(3) Fisheries (Tuna, Whaling, etc.)

Japan is one of the major fishing countries and consumers of fishery products in the world. Japan actively contributes through international organizations to the appropriate conservation management and sustainable use of marine living resources.

Japan advocates the view that cetaceans are one of the marine living resources that should be utilized in a sustainable manner based on scientific evidence. Based on the fact that the International Whaling Commission (IWC) has a dual mandate, that is, of “conservation

¹⁶ The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI): SOFI is an annual report on global food insecurity and nutrition jointly prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

of whale stocks” and “orderly development of the whaling industry,” Japan has sincerely engaged in dialogues based on scientific data collected for more than 30 years. However, it unveiled the fact that it is not possible to seek the coexistence with States that deny sustainable use of whales and focus exclusively on their protection. Therefore, Japan withdrew from the IWC in 2019 and resumed commercial whaling.

Japan limits commercial whaling to its territorial sea and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) with catch limits calculated in line with the method adopted by the IWC, which is based on scientific evidence, and in a manner that will not adversely affect the stock even if the whaling continues for 100 years.

Japan’s policy of actively contributing to international cooperation for the proper management of marine living resources has not changed since its withdrawal from the IWC. Japan has been actively involved and has cooperated with international organizations such as the IWC and the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO), including participation as an observer at the Meeting of the IWC, and IWC Scientific Committee meetings.

Japan has also developed non-lethal scientific research on whale stocks, some of which is conducted jointly with the IWC. The results are provided to the IWC and other international organizations as important data that can serve as a basis for realizing sustainable utilization and appropriate management of whale stocks.

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing is one of the threats to the sustainable fishing industry. Furthermore, Japan has been encouraging non-contracting parties to sign the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA), which stipulates rules for port states to take measures against IUU fishing vessels, including denial of port entry. At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, it was confirmed that the G7 members will continue to encourage these parties to join the PSMA and shared an intention to take further action to end IUU fishing. Japan is also providing capacity building assistance to developing countries for the purpose of countering IUU fishing.

In the Central Arctic Ocean, there are concerns about the possibility of unregulated fishing in the

future due to partial melting of ice caused by global warming. Against the backdrop of these concerns, the Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean entered into force in June 2021 with 10 member countries and organizations, including Japan and five Arctic Ocean coastal states. In June 2023, ten countries and organizations, including Japan, participated in the second meeting of the contracting parties, adopted an outline of joint program of scientific research and monitoring in the Central Arctic Ocean and also had discussions on the formulation of conservation and management measures for exploratory fishing.

As one of the largest tuna consumer countries, Japan has joined Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) for tuna, and leads discussions on strengthening conservation and management measures (CMMs) at annual meetings and other occasions. In recent years, results are being seen from active efforts through international resource management. For Pacific bluefin tuna, management flexibility was increased through the decision to allow a higher limit for transferring part of the catch limit of small fish to the large fish limit by a factor of 1.47, at the annual meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) in December. For Atlantic bluefin tuna, in light of the recovery of resource levels in recent years, the total allowable catch (TAC) in the eastern Atlantic Ocean was increased by 12.7% over the previous year at the annual meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) held in November 2022, and operations were conducted in 2023 based on this level. As for southern bluefin tuna, the Conservation Commission for Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) held in October confirmed that, based on a recommendation from the Scientific Committee, the TAC will increase by about 17% over the period from 2024 to 2026.

With respect to Pacific saury, the stock has fallen to record lows, and the resulting poor catches have become a problem. At the annual meeting of the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC) held in Sapporo in March, the NPFC agreed to measures to reduce the TAC by 25%, and for the first time agreed to either reduce the number of vessels in actual operation or to introduce a limit on the number of operating days

in order to reduce fishing effort. Measures to protect small fish were also strengthened. For future meetings, it remains important to further improve resource management.

With regard to anadromous fish, discussions were held by the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC) to establish conservation measures for these species. At the 30th annual meeting of the NPAFC, held in May, National Fisheries University Director General of School Affairs Department, KONDO Yoshiakiyo was elected Executive Director of the Secretariat and assumed office in September.

As for Japanese eel, the second scientific meeting on eel was held in May under the leadership of Japan. Scientific knowledge on the management of eel stocks was shared. At the 16th informal consultation on international cooperation held in July in Tokyo, Japan, the ROK, China, and Taiwan discussed and confirmed the establishment of limits on glass eel stocking in aquaculture ponds and the promotion of cooperation in joint research on Japanese eels.

(4) Foreign Direct Investment in Japan

With regard to promotion of foreign direct investment in Japan, the “Council for Promotion of Foreign Direct Investment in Japan,” which has been held since 2014, is spearheading initiatives to promote activities for discovering and attracting investments. The Council gathers views of foreign company managers and continues to take additional measures such as regulatory and institutional reforms and support measures that help improve the investment environment in Japan, bearing in mind the needs of foreign companies.

Based on the “Five Promises for Attracting Foreign Businesses to Japan,” decided at the second meeting of the Council for the Promotion of Foreign Direct Investment in Japan, held in March 2015, foreign companies have utilized the Investment Advisor Assignment System¹⁷ since April 2016 to meet with the relevant State Ministers in charge. In June 2023, the Cabinet approved the Basic Policy on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform 2023, which revised the target upward for foreign direct investment stocks

from current 80 trillion Japanese yen to 100 trillion Japanese yen by 2030.

Along with implementing various measures adopted by the Council for Promotion of Foreign Direct Investment in Japan, MOFA utilizes diplomatic resources to engage in initiatives through diplomatic missions overseas and foreign direct investment promotion by key government officials, strategically implementing various initiatives towards promoting foreign direct investment in Japan. The “Contact Points for Foreign Direct Investment in Japan,” established at 126 diplomatic missions overseas, have been conducting surveys of requests to improve Japanese regulations and systems, calling for investments in Japan by making use of networks of contacts at diplomatic missions overseas, and holding events to promote foreign direct investment in Japan, among other initiatives. More than 700 activities were conducted by the Contact Points in FY2022. In May 2023, the decision was made to establish “FDI Task Forces” in five locations (New York, London, Dusseldorf, Paris, and Sydney), through collaboration at the level of heads of diplomatic missions and JETRO overseas offices in order to fundamentally strengthen mechanisms to attract human resources and investment from overseas. These task forces are currently working to strengthen operations at each location.

Furthermore, in Japan, MOFA held a Global Business Seminar in March 2023, with the theme of promoting foreign direct investment in Japan. Lectures were given by government and local government officials, representatives of the business community, and businesspeople on recent investment trends in Japan, the Japanese business environment from the view of foreign countries, and efforts and policies to promote foreign direct investment in Japan. Lively discussions took place among approximately 120 participants, including domestic and foreign businesspeople, foreign embassy officials in Tokyo, representatives of foreign economic organizations and chambers of commerce and industry in Japan, and government and local government officials.

¹⁷ A system that seeks to prepare an environment in which foreign companies that have made important investments in Japan can easily consult with the Government of Japan through State Ministers and other officials from the ministries that oversee the main industries in which these companies engage.

(5) The Road to 2025 World Expo Osaka (Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan)

Following the approval of a registration dossier for Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan at the General Assembly of the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) held in December 2020, Japan began activities to officially invite other countries and international organizations to participate in the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan. As of January 2024, 160 countries and regions, as well as nine international organizations, have confirmed their intention to participate.

The Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition held its “International Planning Meeting” in June 2023 and “International Participants Meeting” in November, inviting countries and regions and international

organizations that had been invited to participate to Osaka City to provide various information.

The Expo, which is expected to attract a large number of visitors from Japan and abroad, will be a good opportunity to convey the appeals of Japan to the world and accelerate efforts to achieve the SDGs, which are all to be achieved by 2030, under the theme of “Designing Future Society for Our Lives.” To address various issues such as delays in the construction of official participants’ pavilion, MOFA will work closely with relevant ministries and agencies and the Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition, including through diplomatic channels and overseas diplomatic missions, and will continue to make a concerted national effort to ensure the success of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan.

4

Efforts to Promote Understanding and Trust in Japan

3

1 Strategic Communications

(1) Responding to Information Warfare, Including Countering Disinformation

As geopolitical competition intensifies, international information warfare in the cognitive domain through information manipulation, including the spread of disinformation, is a constant occurrence, and has been particularly conspicuous in relation to the situation in Ukraine and Israel/Palestine. Foreign information manipulation, in which state and non-state actors deliberately spread disinformation and/or narratives to undermine confidence in Japan's policy making or to impede democratic processes and international cooperation, is becoming increasingly important to address.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) is aware of this and, based on the National Security Strategy, is steadily strengthening its information gathering, analysis and communication capabilities in response to information warfare through the cooperation of its information, policy and communication divisions. Also, in responding to foreign information manipulation, resilience of the society as a whole, including media, think tanks and NGOs, is extremely important, and responses by Japan are based on the premise of a free information space. As attempts of spreading disinformation have been observed in the case of ALPS treated water (See Chapter 3, Section 1, 4 (3) C), the government responded to them with intensive communication efforts including the swift issuance of press releases denying the disinformation.

In addition, based on the understanding that countries sharing concerns over foreign information manipulation should take concerted action, the U.S. Japan Memorandum of Cooperation on Countering Foreign Information Manipulation was signed on December 6. Besides, MOFA has also been holding



Signing of the U.S. Japan Memorandum of Cooperation on Countering Foreign Information Manipulation (December 6, Tokyo)

discussions on information manipulation in the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) and bilateral consultations, and has been promoting cooperation with other countries and regions that share the same values.

(2) Initiatives in Strategic Communications

With information warfare becoming a constant issue, strategic communication to increase understanding of Japan's policies and initiatives, as well as interest in Japan, has become more important than ever. MOFA conducts strategic communication based on three pillars: (a) making further efforts to disseminate Japan's policies, initiatives, and positions; (b) sharing Japan's rich and diverse attractions, and (c) expanding interest in, understanding of, and support for Japan. MOFA collects and analyzes information from a variety of angles, and then conducts strategic communications based on the National Security Strategy.

(a) In terms of communication in 2023 about Japan's policies, initiatives, and positions, in response to the international community becoming increasingly divided and confrontational, such as with the emergence of a new crisis in the Middle East and in addition to Russia's protracted aggression against Ukraine,

MOFA, through various diplomatic opportunities and initiatives and while utilizing social media, has focused on disseminating information about Japan's basic ideas on and initiatives for peace, stability, and prosperity in the international community, for maintaining and strengthening the international order based on the rule of law, and for global issues. In addition, MOFA also worked to enhance public awareness of issues concerning the recognition of history and territory/sovereignty.

In particular, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, and other government officials hold press conferences, give interviews, contribute articles, or give speeches during overseas visits and international conferences, and Japan's diplomatic missions overseas also actively communicate with the governments, citizens, and media of their host countries. When foreign media outlets publish reports that include factual errors, the MOFA Headquarters and diplomatic missions overseas promptly lodge protests or post rebuttals, to ensure that media reports are made based on objective facts and understanding. In addition, MOFA creates publicity materials such as videos on Japan's foreign policy and then utilizes them in a variety of formats. Furthermore, in order to make Japan's basic positions and viewpoints on policy issues understood, it is also important to enhance coordination with experts and think tanks. From this perspective, MOFA invites influential experts and media personnel to Japan from abroad, and provides them with opportunities to exchange views with various people including Japanese government officials, as well as to visit various places around Japan for study tours and to conduct interviews. MOFA dispatches Japanese experts abroad, while extending its support for Japan-related seminars conducted by overseas research institutions.

By taking advantage of various opportunities and utilizing various tools, Japan is also engaged in efforts to strategically communicate information about matters on the recognition of history, including the issue of the so-called "comfort women" and various issues on Japan's territory and sovereignty. For baseless criticism of the Rising Sun Flag, accurate information about the

flag is provided in a variety of forms, including making multi-language explanatory materials and videos available on MOFA's website to gain understanding from the international community.¹

In order to increase the effectiveness of these communications, it is essential for MOFA to utilize various social media and MOFA's website, and efforts are being made to strengthen communications through these means.

(b) With regard to sharing Japan's rich and diverse attractions, from a viewpoint of promoting understanding of Japan abroad and of fostering an international environment in which Japan and its people are favorably received, MOFA conducts a variety of cultural exchange and communication projects through its diplomatic missions overseas and the Japan Foundation (JF). Specifically, through cultural exchange projects utilizing its diplomatic missions and the Japan Foundation's overseas locations around the world, as well as through projects such as the Japan International MANGA Award, MOFA utilizes social media and other methods to actively promote the appeal of a wide range of Japanese culture, from traditional culture to pop culture. In doing so, Japan has worked on initiatives in cooperation with people in the country and abroad to preserve tangible and intangible cultural heritage throughout the world and to promote the inscription of Japan's cultural and natural heritage on the World Heritage List and the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Moreover, in order to promote a deeper understanding of Japan, through organizations such as JF, MOFA has also been making various efforts to promote people-to-people and intellectual exchanges, and Japanese language education. These efforts include youth exchange programs between Japan and other countries and regions under Japan's Friendship Ties Programs among others. MOFA also supports Japanese studies at universities and research institutions in major countries around the world.

Through these initiatives, MOFA will continue to make even further efforts with the aim of expanding interest in, understanding of, and support for Japan.

¹ Reference materials concerning the Rising Sun Flag are available on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) here:

(1) https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page22e_000892.html

(2) Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9co0U5lcE0c>

"Rising Sun Flag as Japanese Longstanding Culture" (Posted on MOFA's YouTube channel from September 6, 2021)

(1)

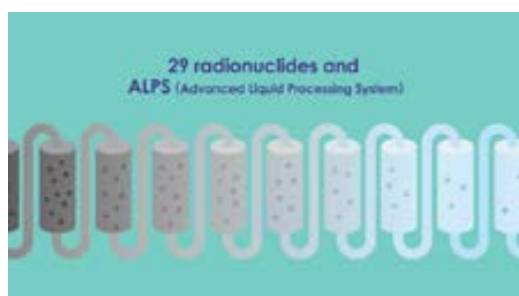


(2)





Social media utilized by MOFA



Policy promotion video, “29 Radionuclides and ALPS” (English) (Posted on MOFA’s YouTube official channel from July 13, 2023)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGnbpLbjw4w>



(3) JAPAN HOUSE

MOFA has established JAPAN HOUSE overseas communication hubs in three cities, namely São Paulo (Brazil), London (UK) and Los Angeles (U.S.). The purpose is to attract a wide range of people, including those who were not necessarily interested in Japan previously, and to enlarge the base of the people with interest in, understanding of, and support for Japan by communicating Japan’s rich and varied attractiveness as well as its various policies, initiatives, and views.

JAPAN HOUSE promotes effective communication by (a) communicating through “All-Japan” efforts by the central and local governments, private sectors, and other actors, (b) promoting outreach that reflects the needs of local communities, and (c) providing a “one-stop-service” where various information related to Japan can be obtained from one location.

With the slogan “Mind-blowing Encounters with Japan across the Globe,” each JAPAN HOUSE conducts locally designed exhibitions which are

independently organized by each hub, as well as touring exhibitions that are selected by experts from public proposals in Japan and exhibited at all three hubs. In this way, JAPAN HOUSE works to provide high-quality exhibitions by leveraging the knowhow of experts both in those hub cities and in Japan. In addition to exhibitions, Japan’s diverse attractions, including traditional culture and arts, advanced technology, nature, architecture, food and design, as well as its various policies, initiatives and views, are also widely disseminated through other formats such as lectures, seminars, workshops, webinars, library spaces, websites and social media, merchandise, food and beverages, and cafés. JAPAN HOUSE is also currently working actively to win over new audiences by conducting some exhibitions in other cities or in neighboring countries, and by using hybrid methods combining in-person and online formats that suit the post-COVID-19 era. By the end of 2023, the total number of visitors for the three hubs had exceeded 5.97 million, indicating that the hubs are becoming firmly established as a major cultural facility in each city.

(4) Media Coverage of Japan in Other Countries and Regions, and Dissemination to Foreign Media

In 2023, foreign media coverage of Japan was centered on diplomatic issues such as the G7 Hiroshima Summit and Ministerial Meetings, Prime Minister Kishida’s Attendance at the NATO Summit, the Japan-U.S.-Republic of Korea (ROK) Summit, the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, the situation surrounding Israel and Palestine, the situation in Ukraine, Japan-China relations, Japan-ROK relations, and the issues concerning North Korea, as well as the discharge of ALPS treated water, strengthening of defense capabilities, and energy policies, among other topics.

MOFA promptly and proactively provides information and assistance to foreign media in order to gain the understanding and support of the international community on Japan’s policies, initiatives and positions. Communication through foreign media includes efforts to conduct interviews with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, regular press conferences by the Foreign Minister (livestreaming in Japanese and

English is also available online), briefings, press releases, press tours and other means. MOFA makes efforts to achieve strategic and effective communications by providing information in a timely manner based on the diplomatic schedule. Furthermore, in cases where there are significant factual errors or reports that are incompatible with Japan's position, MOFA promptly lodges protests or posts rebuttals to the media in an effort to ensure that media reports are made based on objective facts and understanding.

2023 was a year in which Japan attracted a great deal of attention from the international community, such as hosting the G7 Hiroshima Summit as the G7 Presidency. The Prime Minister and Foreign Minister also actively communicated with overseas media through contributions and interviews. For example, when hosting the G7 Hiroshima Summit, Prime Minister Kishida, in his contributions to several foreign media outlets, stated that the international community is at a historic turning point, and that the G7, which shares basic values, must lead the world by effectively responding to the critical challenges of the international community. He also called on the G7 to clearly articulate its positive and concrete contributions so as to confirm the unity of the G7 and strengthen its role towards the realization of an international society of cooperation, and furthermore called for the G7's firm determination to resolve the various challenges facing the international community to be strongly communicated together from Hiroshima. In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi also gave an interview to CNN to convey Japan's stance on the increasingly severe security environment. In addition, during Foreign Minister Kamikawa's visit to Brunei, Viet Nam, Laos, and Thailand in October and during Prime Minister Kishida's visit to the Philippines and Malaysia in November, via local media, they communicated Japan's stance on further strengthening relations and cooperation alongside the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. Prime Minister Kishida also contributed articles to the local media of member states on the occasion of the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation.

In 2023, the Prime Minister contributed articles and held interviews 34 times, and the Foreign Minister contributed articles and held interviews for a total of

36 times. Additionally, MOFA provided information to foreign media through the Press Secretary and other means, and held press briefings to local media on the occasion of overseas visits by the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. Under the project to invite foreign media coverage, in 2023, 20 invitation programs were provided (of which 13 were coupled with visits to Japan, and 7 were coverage in online format), and more than 153 journalists from a cumulative total of 87 countries participated in the project.

(5) Information Provision Through the Internet

MOFA has been actively engaged in providing information through the Internet, such as MOFA's website and various social media, including by opening an official Instagram account in 2023, in order to gain better understanding and draw further support of people inside and outside Japan on Japan's foreign policy. In addition to livestreaming the regular press conferences by the Foreign Minister (in Japanese and English), MOFA also promptly and proactively communicated information about the G7 Hiroshima Summit and related meetings, the situation in Ukraine, the situation in Gaza, the ALPS treated water, and other topics.

Considering MOFA's English website to be an important tool for public diplomacy, MOFA has been enhancing its efforts to provide information in English on Japan's foreign policy concerning such subjects as territory and sovereignty, recognition of history, and security, as well as Japan's position on international affairs and Japan's diverse appeals. MOFA has also been working to provide information in local languages through the social media and the websites of Japanese embassies, consulates-general, and permanent missions overseas.

2 Cultural, Sports, and Tourism Diplomacy

(1) Overview

For a very large number of foreign nationals who have an interest in Japan, Japanese culture is a motive for their interests. MOFA and JF work to create positive images of Japan abroad, boosting the overall Japanese

brand. In order to expand interest in, understanding of, and support for Japan amongst a wide range of people overseas and to increase the number of tourists visiting Japan in the post-COVID-19 world, MOFA and JF carry out various projects ranging from communicating the appeal of Japanese culture to promoting sports and inbound tourism. For example, “Cultural Projects of Diplomatic Missions Overseas” introduce the broad spectrum of Japan’s attractions, from traditional culture such as tea ceremony, flower arrangement, and martial arts, to food culture and pop culture such as *anime*, *manga*, and fashion.

Under the “Japan Brand Program,” MOFA has dispatched experts of various fields overseas to establish a national brand and give Japan a stronger presence in the world. MOFA also holds seminars, workshops, and demonstrations to share Japan’s diverse charm and strengths.

In order to carry on the legacy of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 (“Tokyo 2020 Games”) held in 2021, MOFA engaged in initiatives as part of the “Sport for Tomorrow (SFT)”, which is Japan’s program for international exchanges and cooperation through sports, such as various sports exchanges and sports promotion support projects overseas, dispatching and inviting sports instructors through the JICA Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) program, and the provision of sporting equipment and improvement of sporting facilities through Cultural Grant Assistance. MOFA also provided information about these initiatives in Japan and abroad on MOFA’s “MofaJapan × SPORTS” official X (formerly Twitter) account.

MOFA also conducts a range of activities through Japan’s diplomatic missions overseas to promote a deeper understanding of Japan amongst the diverse human resources who will lead the next generation. These include providing information on studying in Japan; building alumni networks comprising foreign nationals who have studied in Japan; cooperating with the JET Programme, which invites young foreign nationals to work for local governments in Japan; holding exchange and invitation programs for youth and adults from Asia and the U.S.; and providing support for Japanese studies at universities and research institutions.

Promoting Japanese language overseas fosters individuals who engage in exchange with Japan, deepens understanding of Japan, and creates foundations for friendship between Japan and other countries, while also contributing to the realization of a society of harmonious coexistence with foreign nationals in Japan. From this perspective, within Japan the Act on Promotion of Japanese Language Education was promulgated and entered into force in June 2019, and the Basic Policy for the Comprehensive and Effective Implementation of Measures to Promote Japanese Language Education (Cabinet Decision) was formulated in June 2020. Based on these policies, through JF, MOFA is working to improve the overseas environment for Japanese language education, including by dispatching Japanese language specialists overseas, conducting training programs for overseas Japanese language teachers, and developing Japanese language education materials. MOFA has also been working to meet social need by providing Japanese language education to foreigners interested in coming to Japan for work.

In cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Japan has been actively engaged in protecting tangible and intangible cultural heritage as well as natural heritage across the world. Moreover, Japan is actively taking part in the promotion of international frameworks for safeguarding heritage through conventions such as the World Heritage Convention and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

By putting creative efforts into promoting such cultural and sports diplomacy, such as through greater use of digital tools, and by sharing information on Japan’s charms to the world, MOFA also contributes to bringing more foreign visitors to Japan in the future.

(2) Cultural Programs

For Japan’s foreign policy to be smoothly implemented in the international community, it is important to promote a better understanding of Japan among the individuals who form the foundation of public opinion and policy making, and to make Japan’s image even more positive. Based on this perception, MOFA engages in communicating information about the diverse attractions of Japan through diplomatic missions overseas



50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Viet Nam (May 14, Ha Nam, Viet Nam)



150th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Peru (August 22, Lima, Peru)

and JF (See the Column on page 334). Diplomatic missions overseas carry out a range of cultural projects as part of efforts to promote a deeper understanding of Japan and to make Japan's image even more positive in the areas under their jurisdiction. For example, they actively introduce Japanese lifestyles and culture such as workshops on tea ceremony, flower arrangement and origami, Japanese film screenings, Japanese music performances, martial arts demonstrations, exhibitions on traditional crafts and Japanese photography, popular culture such as anime and manga, as well as Japan's food culture. At the same time, they also plan and implement Japanese speech contests and essay contests.

Additionally, MOFA takes advantage of years marking diplomatic milestones to revitalize cultural and people-to-people exchange projects and to further strengthen relations by intensively holding large-scale, comprehensive anniversary events with government-affiliated organizations and private companies. 2023 marks the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Viet Nam, the 150th anniversary of the establishment of



The 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation and the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Indonesia: Performance of "Dionysus" by the SCOT theatre company (October, Jakarta, Indonesia; Photo: The Japan Foundation ©Djajusman)

diplomatic relations between Japan and Peru, the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Samoa, and the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Cambodia.

In collaboration with MOFA and diplomatic missions overseas, JF is utilizing its overseas locations to develop arts and cultural exchange projects between Japan and other countries. In 2023, taking advantage of the opportunity provided by the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, JF implemented a variety of cultural exchange projects in Southeast Asian countries, including music concerts and collaborative theatre productions. JF also implements "real" projects (in-person, not online) around the world, such as hosting the Japan Pavilion in the 18th International Architecture Exhibition at the Venice Biennale.

In parallel with these efforts, JF has continued and enhanced the online projects that were launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as "STAGE BEYOND BORDERS," which introduces Japanese performing arts works to the world via streaming videos, and "JFF+," which introduces various topics related to Japanese cinema and interviews with film industry professionals, as well as streaming films. Through them, JF has been developing projects to promote Japanese culture from multiple perspectives.

Under the "WA Project: Toward Interactive Asia through Fusion and Harmony" announced by Prime Minister Abe in December 2013, for the past ten years JF has been implementing two-way arts and cultural exchange programs and the NIHONGO Partners Program. In order to continue and expand



Co-presented by the Japan Foundation and Tokyo International Film Festival, the TIFF Lounge hosted a master class by Director KORE-EDA Hirokazu for the Asian Film Students Exchange Program (October 26, Tokyo; Photo: The Japan Foundation, ©2023 TIFF)

people-to-people exchange programs with ASEAN member states and other regions, the successor to the “WA Project,” the “Partnership to Co-create a Future with the Next Generation: WA Project 2.0,” was announced at the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation in December. Over the next 10 years, JF will intensively implement comprehensive people-to-people exchange programs centered around the next generation of leaders from Japan and ASEAN member states and other regions. JF also presents the “TIFF Lounge,” in cooperation with the Tokyo International Film Festival (TIFF), now in its fourth year. Through this initiative, it provides opportunities for Japanese filmmakers active on the front lines and filmmakers in Asia as well as other countries and regions around the world, to engage in dialogues and exchanges in Tokyo, and as a special program, Director KORE-EDA Hirokazu held a master class for students from China, Southeast Asia (Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Viet Nam), and Japan.

The Japan International MANGA Award was launched by MOFA in 2007 to honor overseas manga artists who have created outstanding manga works, with the aim of spreading manga culture overseas and promoting international cultural exchanges through manga. The 17th Japan International MANGA Award, held in 2023, received a record-high 587 entries from 82 countries and regions; the Gold Award was presented to a work from Taiwan, Silver Awards were presented to works from Spain, Viet Nam, and Hong Kong, and the Special Encouragement Award was presented to a work from Saudi Arabia. This year, there



The Award Ceremony of the 16th Japan International MANGA Award (March 2, Tokyo)

were entries for the first time from four countries: Ethiopia, Comoros, Senegal, and Rwanda.

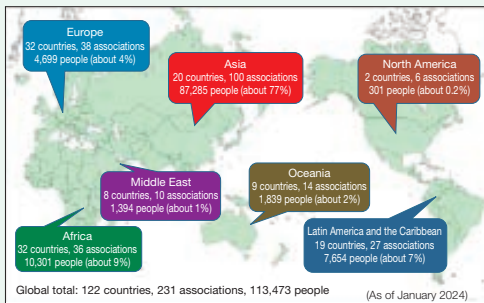
(3) People-to-People Exchange and Exchanges in the Area of Education and Sports

To build personal relationships and promote a better understanding of Japan, MOFA carries out a number of programs that invite foreign nationals who have a significant influence on shaping public opinion and the policymaking process and who are expected to play a leading role in various fields. In the area of education and sports, MOFA conducts various activities to promote a wide range of people-to-people exchanges. These programs not only promote mutual understanding and friendships but also enhance Japan's presence in the international community, which considerably benefits Japan's national diplomatic interests.

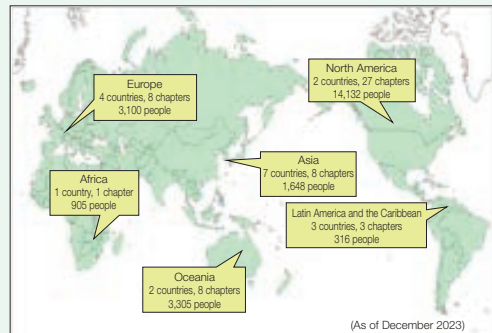
A Student Exchange Programs

MOFA actively introduces the attractiveness and opportunities of studying in Japan to foreign students through Japanese diplomatic missions overseas, and implements application and screening procedures to grant the Japanese Government (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) Scholarship to promising students abroad. It also makes efforts to network with former foreign students who have returned to their home countries through Japan Alumni Associations and to expand interest in, understanding of, and support for Japan. In March, the third Japan Alumni Conference was held in a hybrid format following the event held in the previous year,

Alumni associations and members by region



JET Alumni Association Chapters and members



and it was attended by participants from 48 countries. At the Conference, participants gave reports on each alumni association's domestic activities and exchanged opinions about conferences held in each region, and strengthened networks among alumni from different countries.

The Quad Fellowship was announced at the Second Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Summit Meeting in September 2021 as an educational and people-to-people exchange cooperation program, and awards scholarships for studying in the U.S. to outstanding individuals in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) from the four countries. Under this framework, in August the first 100 fellows (25 from each of the four countries) began their studies in the U.S.

B JET Programme (The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme)

The JET Programme was launched in 1987 to improve foreign language education in Japan and promote international exchange with Japanese citizens in local areas. This program is administered by local authorities and other organizations in cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), MOFA, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), and the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR). Through the program, young foreign nationals are invited to Japan and appointed to posts in local governments and schools. MOFA is responsible for the application and screening process, pre-departure orientation, and support for the activities of the JET Alumni Association (JETAA), which operates in 19 countries



Public relations activities by JET alumni at the Sakura Matsuri – Japanese Street Festival in Washington, D.C. (April 15-16, Washington, D.C., U.S.; Photo: JET Programme Alumni Association)

and has about 23,000 members.

In FY 2023, 5,831 participants from 50 countries, including 1,995 new participants, were dispatched to all parts of Japan, and more than about 77,000 people have participated in the JET Programme to date as of July 1, 2023. JETAA conducts activities to introduce Japan in many countries. Many of those who went through the JET Programme are important human and diplomatic assets for Japan, as they go on to engage in activities that contribute to expanding interest in, understanding of, and support for Japan while also playing an active role in a variety of fields in their own countries.

C Sports Exchange

Sports enable communication beyond language and can be an effective tool for promoting friendly relations and a better understanding of Japan. Under the “Projects for Sports Diplomacy Enhancement”



"Projects for Sports Diplomacy Enhancement": Handover ceremony for a donation of beach volleyballs to the Cook Islands (June 12, Cook Islands)

scheme, MOFA is engaged in sports exchange and cooperation initiatives including providing support for the transport of equipment to sports organizations in various countries, thereby contributing to the development of bilateral relations. These projects contribute to enhancing mutual understanding internationally by promoting diplomacy through sports and by expanding interest in, understanding of, and support for Japan. At the same time, they also improve the standing of Japan in the world of international sports.

D Japan's Friendship Ties Programs

With a view to expanding the basis for Japan's diplomacy, which develops bilateral and inter-regional relationships between Japan and countries and regions in the Asia-Pacific, North America, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, MOFA implements the Japan's Friendship Ties Programs to promote multifaceted understanding of Japan to youths from various countries and regions, through invitations, dispatches, and online exchanges. In addition, these programs also work to expand interest in, understanding of, and support for Japan, and to strengthen the spread of information about Japan from overseas. In 2023, about 2,000 youths participated in these programs, attending lectures by Japanese experts in politics, economics, society, culture, history, and diplomatic policies, and also went on observation tours in each field and had exchanges of opinions and experienced Japanese culture. These programs kindled interest in Japan amongst young people from various countries and regions; broadened the base of support for Japan; and contributed to promoting understanding



Japan Friendship Ties Programs "JENESYS": Holding the "ASEAN-Japan Students Conference" to commemorate the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation (December 15-18, Tokyo; Photo: Japan International Cooperation Center)



Japan Friendship Ties Programs "MIRAI": Visit to a biofuel production plant (November 16, Kanagawa Prefecture)

of Japan and making Japan's image even more positive in the international community via participants sharing what they learned through the program and their experiences in Japan through reports to their organizations and social media. In addition, about 90 alumni reunions and online Japan revisits were held for alumni of these programs, which increased their motivation to learn about their areas of interest and fostered strong networks by promoting even deeper understanding of Japan, including its relations with other countries and regions.

(4) Exchange in the Intellectual Field

A Japanese Studies

Through JF, MOFA comprehensively supports a range of overseas research activities related to the politics, economy, society, and culture of Japan. In 2023, JF's



Group discussion by Japanese and international researchers (September, Tokyo; Photo: The Japan Foundation)

Japanese Studies Fellowship Program provided 161 researchers with the opportunity to visit Japan for research. Additionally, with the aim of forming and strengthening networks among researchers both in Japan and abroad, including JF Fellows currently in residence, Japanese Studies Fellow Conferences were held in September at the University of Tokyo and in October at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in Kyoto.

JF also dispensed grants for expanding Japanese studies faculty members, for organizing seminars and symposiums, including online events, and for expanding the collection of books on Japan to a total of 47 institutions of Japanese studies in 25 countries and regions in 2023. In addition, it provided support to academic societies with the goal of promoting network building among Japanese studies researchers and research institutions from various countries and regions.

B International Dialogue

JF also implements Global Partnerships Programs for international dialogues that aim to create and share new knowledge and wisdom, to resolve common issues, and to deepen mutual understanding among future generations. Specifically, it hosted seminars and symposiums based on the themes of common international issues, and conducted literary exchanges by dispatching or inviting authors and other guests. In addition, with a view to deepening interest in and understanding of Japan at the grassroots level in the U.S., it planned, implemented, and supported exchange projects that contribute to promoting dialogue at various levels, human resource development, and the establishment



Panel discussion at the international symposium for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation (March, Tokyo; Photo: The Japan Foundation)



JFIPP Network Followship (Disaster Resilience Group) roundtable at the Australian Embassy in Japan (September, Tokyo; Photo: The Japan Foundation)

of interpersonal networks. These include the implementation of the Japan Outreach Initiative (JOI) program, a Japan-U.S. grassroots exchange program that dispatches Japanese coordinators to the U.S.

In addition, to commemorate the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, in March, JF held an international symposium entitled “ASEAN-Japan Relations: Entering a New Stage toward a Global Partnership,” where, from the perspective of how ASEAN member states and Japan will work together and cooperate in the future, discussions were held on building new relationships among the next generation of experts. Furthermore, from July to November, JF held the ASEAN-Japan Youth Forum TASC2023, where students from ASEAN and Japan thought together and deepened ties with the aim of co-creating a better world. Additionally, to develop human resources who can contribute to realizing the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” advocated by the Government of Japan, JF launched a new fellowship program called “the Japan Foundation Indo-Pacific Partnership (JFIPP)” in

which experts and practitioners in the region addressed common issues, and in FY2023 a total of 47 individuals participated. Furthermore, with the aim of fostering human resources who can serve as the foundation for future-oriented Japan-China relations, the program invited university and high school students to Japan and conducted online exchange programs.

C Japan-United States Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON)

CULCON is a panel where experts from the public and private sectors in Japan and the U.S. engage in discussions on culture, educational exchanges, and intellectual dialogues. At the 30th Plenary Session of CULCON that was held in October, discussions were held on strengthening Japan-U.S. exchanges based on the interim reports of subcommittee meetings on the two themes of (1) information access and sharing in the digital age, and (2) promoting subnational diplomacy and local/regional exchanges. In December, Japan CULCON Chair Sasae submitted to Prime Minister Kishida the Joint Statement by the U.S.-Japan CULCON committee members based on these discussions.



The 30th Plenary Session of the Japan-U.S. Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON) (October 6, Atlanta, U.S.; Photo: The Japan Foundation)

D Cooperation with the United Nations University (UNU)

The UNU is the only UN organization headquartered in Japan, and, as a think tank for all UN agencies, the UNU contributes to the international community not only in research on global issues including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but also in human resource development by offering degree programs, and Japan provides a variety of cooperation and support.

In March, Prof. Tshilidzi Marwala, who served as Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Johannesburg, was appointed as Rector of UNU. Also in March, Rector Marwala paid a courtesy call to Foreign Minister Hayashi and had an exchange of views on strengthening of relations between UNU and Japan, engagement with the “Global South,” and responses to global issues. In November, Rector Marwala also paid a courtesy call to Foreign Minister Kamikawa, where they concurred to further deepen coordination between Japan and the UNU, including in addressing global issues such as the promotion of people-centered international cooperation and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in a manner that protects “human dignity.”

In addition, Prof. SHIRAHASE Sawako, UNU Senior Vice-Rector and UN Assistant Secretary-General, is helping to promote discussion on SDGs through the BIG IDEAS dialogue series and other initiatives.



Foreign Minister Hayashi receives a courtesy call from Rector Marwala, the new Rector of the UNU (March 14, Tokyo)

(5) Promotion of the Japanese Language

As the globalization of Japan's economy prompts more Japanese companies to do business overseas and Japanese pop culture finds increasing global popularity, interest in the Japanese language is growing around the world, especially among young people. Further promotion of the Japanese language overseas promotes understanding of Japan overseas and fosters a more favorable international environment for Japanese people and companies, as well as improving the Japanese language proficiency of foreign nationals who wish to work in Japan, thereby contributing to the realization of a society of harmonious coexistence with foreign nationals in Japan. A survey conducted by JF in FY2021 found that approximately 3.79 million people in 141 countries and regions overseas learn Japanese. The number of applicants for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test offered by JF (including those taking the test in Japan) temporarily decreased after 2020 due to the spread of COVID-19, but has since recovered and has been rapidly increasing, with the number of applicants in 2023 reaching a record high of about 1.48 million. Nevertheless, it is clear that a shortage of Japanese language teachers is a major challenge in the pursuit of satisfying the increasingly diverse interests in and needs concerning Japanese language learning in these many countries and regions.

Through JF, MOFA is working to improve the environment for and to address the diverse needs related to Japanese language education overseas. For example, JF dispatches Japanese language specialists abroad; carries out training programs for Japanese language teachers, foreign-service officers and public officials; trains cultural and academic personnel; supports Japanese language education for children; conducts Japanese language pre-training for nurse and care worker candidates under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Indonesia and the Philippines; encourages educational institutions in each country and region to introduce Japanese language education and supports Japanese language educational activities; develops teaching materials; runs e-learning programs; and promotes the "JF Standard for Japanese-Language Education," which corresponds with international standards for foreign language education. Additionally, as part of the



NIHONGO Partners introduces Japanese culture to local students (October, Depok, Indonesia; Photo: The Japan Foundation)

WA Project, JF is implementing a program to dispatch NIHONGO Partners to ASEAN member states and others as teaching assistants for Japanese language education in secondary schools and other institutions, and in 2023, 285 people were dispatched to 10 countries and regions.

To address labor force shortages brought about by the declining birthrate and aging population in Japan, Japan has begun to accept foreign nationals under the April 2019 residence status as "Specified Skilled Workers." Accordingly, through JF, MOFA has been taking new measures since then in accordance with the "Comprehensive Measures for Acceptance and Coexistence of Foreign Nationals" (decided upon at the December 25, 2018, Ministerial Conference on Acceptance and Coexistence of Foreign Nationals), that include conducting the JF Test for Basic Japanese (JFT-Basic), which assesses the Japanese language ability of foreign nationals who come to Japan (by the end of 2023, a total of about 170,000 people have taken the test in 11 countries overseas and within Japan), as well as developing and disseminating learning materials and curriculum with the goal of fostering people's Japanese language ability effectively, and nurturing local Japanese language teachers who teach Japanese to those who wish to work in Japan.

(6) Cultural Grant Assistance

To promote culture, sports, and higher education in developing countries, as well as provide support for the improvement of facilities and the purchase of equipment to be used in the conservation of cultural heritage, thereby enhancing mutual understanding and friendly relations between Japan and these countries, the Government of Japan provides Cultural Grant Assistance as part of the Official Development

Assistance (ODA). The assistance implemented in 2023 consisted of five Cultural Grant Assistance projects (totaling around 4,467 million Japanese yen) and 15 Grant Assistance for Cultural Grassroots Projects (totaling around 106.45 million Japanese yen).

Specifically, the Government of Japan decided to provide around 4.2 billion Japanese yen in Cultural Grant Assistance for the renovation of a stadium that is popular among Laotian citizens; implemented Cultural Grant Assistance to provide equipment for the exhibiting, restoring, and preserving of cultural assets in museums in Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Zambia, and Viet Nam; and, as Grant Assistance for Cultural Grassroots Projects, implemented Grant Assistance for Cultural Grassroots Projects centered on cooperation in promoting sports, particularly Japanese martial arts (*budo*), and Japanese language studies.

(7) Cooperation through United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

UNESCO is the first international organization that Japan became a member state of after the war, in 1951. Japan is actively involved in a variety of UNESCO projects in the fields of education, science, and culture. Since 1952, Japan has continued to serve as a member of the Executive Board of UNESCO.

Japan also cooperates with UNESCO to provide support to developing countries in areas such as education, science, and culture (See the Column on page 335). In the field of culture, Japan is providing cooperation with the preservation and promotion of the world's tangible and intangible cultural heritage as well as the provision of support in the field of human resource development as its major pillars. It also participates proactively in international frameworks for the protection of cultural heritage. Representative efforts in this area include the provision of support for the restoration and preservation of Angkor monuments in Cambodia since 1994, and the restoration and preservation of the Bamiyan ruins in Afghanistan since 2003. In these projects, Japanese experts played a central role, and human resource development was undertaken to enable local people to protect such sites by themselves in the future. At the same time, Japan has also provided support for the development of conservation and management

plans for heritage sites, as well as for their preservation and restoration. In November, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs KOMURA Masahiro attended the 4th Intergovernmental Conference for the Safeguarding and Development of Angkor held in Paris, where he outlined Japan's support over the past 30 years and stated that the Government of Japan would continue to provide support utilizing Japan's strengths. At the meeting, the other participants, including Cambodia, expressed their gratitude for Japan's long-standing contributions. In recent years, Japan has also been providing support for human resource development to African countries and small island developing states to help them strike a balance between protecting cultural heritage and sustainable development. As for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, support is provided to projects to pass on traditional performing arts such as music, dance, and traditional arts and crafts to the next generation in developing countries, as well as projects involving development of domestic institutions and capacity building for relevant parties to enhance countries' ability to protect intangible cultural heritage by themselves.

In the field of education, on September 13, 2022, Japan deposited the instrument of acceptance of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education with the UNESCO Director-General. This Convention establishes the principles, criteria, and rights and obligations for recognizing or assessing higher-education qualifications, and provides for, among other things, the sharing of information on higher-education institutions. The entry into force of this Convention (March 5, 2023) is expected to contribute to attracting international students to Japan and encouraging Japanese students to study abroad.

UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay has been promoting "Strategic Transformation" toward strengthening UNESCO, which includes reforms for the de-politicization of UNESCO and organizational reforms, and Japan has been consistently supporting the Director-General in her work. Japan will continue to contribute actively to UNESCO's activities advanced under the leadership of Director-General Azoulay. In January, Prime Minister Kishida received a courtesy call from Director-General Azoulay during

his visit to France. Additionally, high-level exchanges of views took place such as a telephone call between Foreign Minister Hayashi and Director-General Azoulay in June and a meeting between Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Komura, and Director General Azoulay, during his visit to France in November.

In addition, on July 10, the U.S. returned to UNESCO for the first time in about five years. The return of the U.S. to UNESCO not only symbolizes the further strengthening of its engagement with the international community, but is also extremely significant in revitalizing and enhancing the effectiveness of activities of UNESCO. Japan has made active diplomatic efforts to support the early return of the U.S. to UNESCO. Japan will strengthen its contribution to activities of UNESCO by closely coordinating with like-minded countries, including the U.S.

A World Heritage Convention

The World Heritage Convention aims to protect cultural heritage and natural heritage internationally as heritage belonging to all mankind. Japan became a party to the Convention in 1992 (as of October 2023, the number of parties to the convention is 195). The sites listed on the “World Heritage List” are known as “World Heritage Sites.” They are classified into “Cultural Heritage Sites” (monuments and remains), “Natural Heritage Sites” (natural areas) and “Mixed Heritage Sites” (sites with both cultural and natural elements). As of October 2023, a total of 1,199 World Heritage Sites are inscribed on the World Heritage List, including 25 heritage sites (20 cultural heritage sites and five natural heritage sites) in Japan. The 45th Session of the World Heritage Committee was postponed due to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and was held in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, in September 2023.

With regard to the “Sites of Japan’s Meiji Industrial Revolution”, the State of Conservation Report was submitted in November 2022 to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre based on the decision adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 2021. Subsequently, a decision based on Japan’s efforts was adopted at the 45th Session of the World Heritage Committee in 2023. Japan will steadily implement this decision.

With regard to the “Sado Island Gold Mines” that Japan nominated for inscription as World Heritage, the nomination dossier was submitted once again to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in January 2023. MOFA will continue to play a steadfast role towards the inscription of the “Sado Island Gold Mines” on the World Heritage List, while explaining about the site to the international community and engaging in in-depth discussions with the relevant countries, so that its extraordinary value as a cultural heritage will be recognized.

B Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage aims to develop an international system for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage such as traditional performing arts and traditional craftsmanship techniques (as of December 2023, the number of parties to the convention is 182). Japan, with abundant experience in safeguarding domestic intangible cultural properties, served as the chair of the intergovernmental working group reviewing the operational mechanism of this Convention, and led discussions by incorporating requests from developing countries. As of December 2023, a total of 22 elements from Japan are inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which is created based upon the Convention. In March 2023, a proposal for “Traditional knowledge and skills of *sake*-making with *koji* mold in Japan” was submitted to UNESCO to be newly inscribed in 2024.

C UNESCO Memory of the World Programme

The UNESCO Memory of the World Programme was established in 1992 to promote the safeguarding of and access to, and raise awareness of valuable archival heritage. As of December 2023, 494 items have been inscribed under the international register.

The fact that member states could not be involved in the assessment process of the nominations under the previous mechanism, even in the cases where there are clear discrepancies of views between the concerned member states, is not consistent with the founding principle of UNESCO: promoting friendly ties and mutual understanding among member states. After

2017, submission of new nominations was suspended, and Japan led the comprehensive review process of the programme. As a result, a new mechanism was approved by the UNESCO Executive Board in April 2021, under which nominations are submitted through the governments of member states. Additionally, a contestation system was newly established, which keeps nominations on hold until dialogues between the concerned countries have been concluded. With the completion of the review process, the call for new nominations resumed in July the same year, and in May 2023, new inscriptions of 64 items were decided. From Japan, “The

Monk Enchin Archives: A History of Japan-China Cultural Exchange,” nominated by Onjo-ji Temple and Tokyo National Museum, was newly inscribed. Also in November, Japan submitted two applications to UNESCO: for the “Three Editions of Buddhist Sacred Canons from China and Korea Preserved at Zojoji, Japan,” nominated by the Jodo Buddhist sect and Zojoji Temple, and for the “Visual archives of Hiroshima atomic bombing — Photographs and films in 1945,” nominated by the Hiroshima City Government, the Chugoku Shimbun, the Asahi Shimbun Company, the Mainichi Newspapers, RCC Broadcasting Co., LTD., and Japan Broadcasting Corporation.

COLUMN

New Forms of International Cultural Exchange Using Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The global COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020 had a major impact on international cultural exchanges, which had previously taken for granted that people would be able to meet face-to-face. The Japan Foundation (JF), an independent administrative institution responsible for cultural exchanges with other countries, was also forced to significantly review its activities amid restrictions on people's cross-border movement. However, while exploring new forms of exchanges that utilize ICT, JF also continued to take on a variety of initiatives to maintain and develop connections between Japan and the world.

For example, the "STAGE BEYOND BORDERS-Selection of Japanese Performances-"¹ project, which was launched in 2021 to introduce Japanese stage performances, used YouTube to globally stream a total of 117 subtitled works in a variety of genres, from traditional performing arts to contemporary theatre. As a result of the creative camera work, videos explaining the production process and background knowledge, and other unique online efforts, as of March 2023 the



Video streaming of anime song singer SUZUKI Konomi's Malaysian performance via STAGE BEYOND BORDERS (March, Photo: JF)

project had been viewed by approximately 18 million people from 137 countries and regions. Numerous people also expressed their gratitude for the project, with comments such as "While I was unable to visit Japan due to COVID-19, this project has become invaluable content for me as a researcher of Japanese dance and theatre." Now that real face-to-face projects have resumed, JF is also working on new ideas, such as live-streaming performances that are hosted overseas.

In the area of film, the special website "JFF+"² was launched in 2020 so that people can enjoy Japanese video contents from anywhere in the world. This site, which distributes films and features articles on Japanese films, has become a valuable tool for conveying the appeal

of Japanese films to movie fans around the world, including those who are not familiar with Japanese films, and recorded 1.74 million page views in FY2022. Viewer comments on videos introducing mini-theaters around Japan, such as "They're so beautiful! I'd love to go!" suggest that the site is also playing a role in encouraging people to visit Japan. Projects such as online networking events with directors also serve as stepping stones to actual film screenings.

Additionally, the "Collaborative Research Workshop for Aspiring Scholars in Japanese Studies," which has been held since 2018 for young Asian scholars of Japanese studies, is also utilizing a combination of online and face-to-face meetings. For the fourth installment of the program in 2022, 24 graduate students from 10 countries and regions, including National University of Singapore, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Vietnam National University, came to Japan after establishing face-to-face relationships through online lectures and training. After arriving in Japan, they collaborated on group work and panel presentations, with participants commenting, "I had a wonderful time, and was able to connect with scholars and graduate students from different cultural backgrounds." This experience of diligently working across countries and fields, along with the network that they have cultivated, will be a powerful boost to their future research activities.

As can be seen from these projects, "online" and "real" are not two mutually exclusive choices; rather, by utilizing the strengths of each, ripple effects can be amplified. Now that life has returned to normal, JF is hoping to further develop and evolve these kinds of initiatives that have taken shape through trial and error, and to further expand the horizons of international cultural exchanges.



Participants and others involved in the Collaborative Research Workshop for Aspiring Scholars in Japanese Studies (February, Japan; Photo: JF)

1 For more information about STAGE BEYOND BORDERS-Selection of Japanese Performances-, visit: <https://stagebb.jpf.go.jp/en/>

2 For more information about JFF+, visit: <https://en.jff.jp/go.jp/>

1



2



COLUMN

Japan's Support for Ukraine through United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Traces of the atrocities in Bucha, Ukraine... the numerous buildings and historical sites destroyed by rocket attacks... When Russia launched its aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, shocking images and information about it were quickly transmitted around the world through television, the internet, and other means. With the rallying cry of "Stand with Ukraine," many countries and people then stepped forward to support Ukraine in its time of need, a memory that is still fresh in people's minds.

In January 2023, a ceremony was held at UNESCO headquarters for the signing of a cooperation document on Japan's assistance to Ukraine through UNESCO, thereby launching the Government of Japan's own initiative to provide assistance through UNESCO in areas such as culture and education. UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay has repeatedly expressed gratitude for the unprecedented level of support that Japan has provided to Ukraine, posting on X that "I thank Japan for its commitment to UNESCO," and using her personal X account to mention Japan's support for Ukraine when she visited Ukraine in April. This cooperation, which is primarily support for Ukraine, consists of programs in three areas: (1) Ensuring the safety of journalists working in war-torn areas (journalism); (2) Monitoring, evaluation, protection, restoration, and human resources development for cultural heritage during wartime (culture); and (3) Providing mental health care support for children and students suffering psychological stress due to damage from the war. Some specific examples of this support are introduced below.

The first is "Journalists' Solidarity Centers," which were established within the framework of journalism support programs. These facilities have been set up in eight locations across Ukraine to enable safe and stable journalistic activities in cities close to combat zones or in cities where the entire town has turned into a battlefield. In addition to functioning as temporary offices, they also provide safety training and lend out protective gear for reporting. The information provided by the local journalists who utilize these facilities is also a valuable source of information for people affected by the war who, mainly for economic reasons, are unable to flee combat zones for safer areas.

The second is a cultural assets protection and restoration program that is currently being carried out within the framework of cultural support. As exemplified by a large-scale missile attack in July by Russian forces on the Ukrainian Orthodox Transfiguration Cathedral in the southern city of Odesa, Russia's aggression against Ukraine is also damaging Ukraine's unique culture, history, and religion. Amidst these circumstances, this program provides monitoring, evaluation, protection, and restoration of endangered cultural properties, as well as various technical training programs for the curators and restoration experts who are the key players in restoring cultural properties.

These are just examples of the support being provided, and Japan hopes to continue contributing to the people of Ukraine, who are facing a national crisis, via the kind of attentive and fine-tuned support that only Japan can provide.



Signing ceremony for the cooperation documents on support for Ukraine (January 31, Paris, France)



The Transfiguration Cathedral in Odesa, damaged by Russian attacks (Photo: UNESCO)



In a meeting with Ukrainian First Lady Zelenska, UNESCO Director-General Azoulay expressed gratitude for Japan's support (December 13, 2022)

Chapter 4

Japan's Diplomacy Open to the Public

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1

Japanese Society and People Deepening Their Ties with the World

1 Japan's Growth and Acceptance of Foreign Nationals

(1) Revival of Japan as a Tourism-Oriented Country, and its Visa System

In March 2016, the Government of Japan formulated the “Tourism Vision to Support the Future of Japan” that set a goal of 40 million inbound international visitors to Japan in 2020 and 60 million in 2030. Based on “Tourism Vision Realization Programs” formulated annually based on the above strategy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) had been implementing a relaxation of visa requirements in order to promote inbound tourism, resulting in a record 31.88 million international visitors to Japan in 2019.

However, the number of inbound international visitors dropped significantly in and after 2020 due to the impact of strengthened border measures imposed by Japan and other countries and regions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. By 2023, however, the pandemic had subsided, and countries and regions have relaxed or eliminated their border measures. Consequently, international cross-border travel has recovered rapidly, with the number of inbound international visitors to Japan in October 2023 exceeding the October 2019 level.

Against this backdrop, the Government of Japan formulated the 4th Tourism Nation Promotion Basic Plan in March and the Action Plan for Expanding Inbound Tourism for the New Era in May toward Japan's revival as a tourism-oriented country in a sustainable manner. These plans set targets to achieve over 32 million inbound international visitors to Japan, 5 trillion Japanese yen in inbound travel revenues, and 20 trillion Japanese yen in domestic travel revenues by 2025.

The relaxation of visa requirements is contributing to the recovery of inbound tourism and becoming more important than ever before. Since January 2023, as a result of discussions with related ministries and agencies in response to requests from other countries, MOFA introduced the visa waiver measure based on the Ordinary Passport Registration System for Qatar on April 2, and visa exemption arrangements for Brazil on September 30, 2023. In addition, MOFA eased multiple entry visa requirements for Mongolia on June 30 and introduced new multiple entry visas for Saudi Arabia on December 4. Furthermore, MOFA launched Working Holiday Programmes with Uruguay, Finland and Latvia, and concurred with the UK on significantly expanding the visa quota issued under the Working Holiday Program. As of the end of December 2023, Japan has taken measures on visa exemption arrangements for ordinary passport holders for 70 countries/regions.

It is important to relax visa requirements in order to facilitate travel by people between Japan and other countries and to promote exchange and mutual understanding. Yet, it is also significant to tighten the screening process for visa issuance in the interest of preventing the entry of criminals, illegal workers, and potential victims of human trafficking. MOFA will continue to consider visa relaxation measures with a comprehensive view of bilateral relations and the significance for diplomacy, with the aim of increasing the number of inbound international visitors to Japan while maintaining the safety and security of society for which Japan is world-renowned, in addition to contributing to the revival of Japan as a tourism-oriented country in terms of both quality and quantity.

(2) Hosting Foreign Human Resources and Their Social Integration

With Japan's declining birthrate, aging population and shrinking population, in order to address worsening labor shortages faced by various businesses including

small- and medium-sized businesses and small-scale enterprises, a “Specified Skilled Worker” system was established in April 2019 for accepting work-ready foreign nationals with certain expertise and skills into some industries, which continued to face difficulties in securing human resources despite efforts that were made to improve productivity and secure human resources domestically. MOFA, as one of the organizations related to this system alongside the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, and the National Police Agency, participates in preparing Memorandums of Cooperation (MOC) that set out a framework for information partnerships with the countries of origin of the workers, and in bilateral discussions based on those MOCs. MOFA also undertakes public relations efforts in the local languages of the major countries of origin of the workers.

Furthermore, the “Ministerial Council on Acceptance and Inclusion of Foreign Human Resources” has been established for the Government of Japan as a whole to comprehensively discuss the acceptance of new foreign human resources and the development of an environment for fostering a society in which foreign nationals living in Japan can coexist in harmony with Japanese nationals. In June, the “Roadmap for the Realization of a Society of Harmonious Coexistence with Foreign Nationals” (partially revised in FY2023) and “Comprehensive Measures for Accepting and Coexisting with Foreign Human Resources” (revised in FY2023) were decided upon. Furthermore, every year MOFA co-hosts the “International Forum on Acceptance of Foreign Nationals and Their Integration into Japan” together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), aiming to encourage debate among the people by providing opportunities to discuss concrete challenges and measures.

2 Japanese Continuing Working in the International Community

(1) Japanese Continuing Working in International Organizations

International organizations are founded to serve the common interest of the international community.

People of various nationalities join these international organizations, and draw on their skills and traits to create an environment where people of the world can live in peace and enjoy prosperity. Many international organizations are working to address global issues that no one country can solve alone, including Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, the Israeli-Palestinian situation and the resulting food and humanitarian crisis, as well as the environment, climate change, refugees, infectious disease control, sustainable development, disarmament and non-proliferation, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, energy, disaster management, labor, human rights and humanity, gender equality, etc.

Talented individuals with specialized knowledge, passion and capabilities to contribute to the world’s interests are needed so that international organizations can competently perform their duties and fulfill the roles expected of them. Japan makes policy contributions as a member country of these international organizations, and makes assessed and voluntary contributions. In addition to these efforts, the activities of Japanese staff are also an important part of Japan’s contributions. Additionally, a larger number of talented Japanese people continuing to work in international organizations will further enhance Japan’s presence in the international community more visibly. Japanese staff are involved in various fields and duties at different locations, but they share the same goal of solving various issues facing the international community (See the Columns on pages 340 and 341). Moreover, encouraging the employment of more Japanese nationals who can continue working on the international stage with professional experience at international organizations will in turn lead to enrichment of Japan’s human resources, contributing to the development of Japan as a whole.

Currently, Japanese nationals are serving in important posts at international organizations that include the United Nations (UN). Japanese nationals are actively performing leadership roles at organizations such as the Universal Postal Union (UPU), a specialized agency of the UN that Mr. METOKI Masahiko assumed leadership of in January 2022, the World Customs Organization (WCO), and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). In addition, for many years Japan has sent a succession of Japanese judges to international courts such as the International Court of

Supporting the Executive Management of UN Specialized Agencies

MIYAJI Akio, Senior Special Advisor, Universal Postal Union (UPU)

The Universal Postal Union (UPU) will celebrate its 150th anniversary in 2024. It was founded with the goal of inter-connecting national postal networks (in technical terms, forming a “single postal territory”) to enable people around the world to send mail of better quality to anywhere in the world. In light of the fact that the organization was founded in 1874 under such a noble goal, and that Japan joined the UPU just three years later in 1877, I cannot but feel the greatness of our predecessors.

I have a peculiar connection with the UPU, and this is my third time working there. The first was as Secretary of the Technical Cooperation Department for five years from 1987, engaging in technical cooperation for Asia and Pacific countries; the second time was as Director of the Operations and Technology Department from 2005 to 2014; and for this third time I have served in my current position since January 2022.

At the UPU Congress held in Abidjan in 2021, Mr. METOKI Masahiko was elected as the Director General of the International Bureau of the UPU, the only Japanese head of a United Nations Specialized Agency. Following this, I was dispatched to assist the executive management (which consists of the Director General and the Deputy Director General, elected positions) of the International Bureau. My current role requires me to provide advice to the top of the organization, which calls on me to work with a new perspective.

The top of the organization is required to properly manage the organization, personnel, and budgets while executing operations, but above all else, it needs to achieve the organization's goals. My first task upon arrival was to address the ways to optimize the organization by forming a transition team together with four senior directors. We were able to develop a proposal in three months and carry it through to implementation. I was then involved with preparing the first annual budget under the new executive management. The UPU is a relatively small organization, but since it is a group of employees with different cultural backgrounds, we strive to properly manage the personnel affairs of the entire organization while holding regular meetings with the Human Resources Department.

For its organizational goals, the UPU develops a strategy and business plan at each Congress held every four years for the next cycle. The executive management is tasked to spare no effort to achieve these strategies and plans. The assignments defined therein are to be discussed, depending on the nature, at meetings of the Council of Administration and the Postal Operations Council, which meet twice a year, respectively. It is the exclusive role of UPU staff to prepare the documents for review at those meetings. The executive management needs to ensure that the projects and tasks assigned to each department are progressing without delay. A new progress management dashboard has thus been introduced so that the executive management can be briefed on a monthly basis by each director.

International organizations need to plan and execute numerous different events while communicating with regional organizations and member countries. In October 2023, the 4th Extraordinary Congress of the UPU was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This successful Congress focused on four pressing issues: (1) how to open up the UPU to stakeholders, (2) postal operators' response to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)/climate change and emissions controls, (3) development of new services for e-commerce, and (4) review of the budget ceiling framework. In June of the same year, the first WCO-UPU Global Conference was held in Tokyo by agreement between the Japanese heads of both the UPU and the World Customs Organization (WCO) (with Mr. MIKURIYA Kunio as Secretary General of the WCO at the time).

It is no exaggeration to say that communication is the key to success in leading an international organization. On a daily basis, projects of all sizes are submitted to the executive management for approval. For my part, I will continue to cheerfully



Exterior view of the UPU International Bureau building (Headquarters: Bern, Switzerland; Photo: UPU)

converse with staff members while doing my utmost to provide appropriate advice as needed, keeping in mind these words of INAMORI Kazuo: “Is what we are doing good and right?”



At the Extraordinary Congress of the UPU (left), and the author in the conference hall (right)
(October, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Photo: UPU)

COLUMN

Voices of Japanese Staff Who Have Been Supporting Activities of the United Nations

Serving with “Humility”: UN Activities in the Field

**United Nations Development Coordination Office (UN DCO),
MABUCHI Kanako, Head of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Azerbaijan**

It has been 20 years since I was deployed to the headquarters of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) as a Junior Professional Officer (JPO) in January 2004. Over the past 20 years, I have served in seven duty stations for four UN agencies. The most rewarding of these assignments were the ones in the field - in Egypt, Myanmar, Zimbabwe, Timor-Leste, and Azerbaijan. Be it in Myanmar when Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest in November 2010, or in Zimbabwe when President Mugabe resigned in November 2017, it has been humbling to witness the countries' historical moments and to contribute to the strategic positioning of the UN in these periods.

Since 2016, I have been serving as the Head of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office. Simply put, I am the Chief of Staff to the UN Resident Coordinator, who is the highest-ranking representative of the UN development system at the country level. While the specific activities vary from country to country, essentially my job is to support and coordinate the activities of over 20 UN agencies so that the UN can provide integrated support to the country's national development plans and progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The word “coordination” might sound like paper-pushing, but the work of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office is like the gift that keeps on giving. Unexpected challenges and issues pop up one after another, with every situation requiring a quick and appropriate response. While coordination of development activities is the core mandate of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, when a disaster strikes, the job switches to coordinating emergency response. In Zimbabwe, for example, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) previously did not have an office in the country, so the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Zimbabwe took the lead in coordinating the humanitarian assistance for the El Niño-induced drought (from 2016 to 2017) and the emergency response to Cyclone Idai (2019). In addition, shortly after I took on my assignment as the Head of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Timor-Leste, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) in response to the spread of COVID-19. While many expatriate staff of the diplomatic missions and international NGOs were repatriated, the UN remained in Timor-Leste with the commitment to Stay and Deliver (remain on the ground and continue to provide assistance even in times of crisis). I can still vividly remember the day - 4 April 2020 - when the last commercial flight from Dili departed. From our residential compound, my family and I looked on as the plane disappeared into the beautiful blue sky. It was a moment when I was reminded of the unique mission of the UN and the immense responsibility and honor of being a UN staff. (As a side note, from June 2020 onward for over a year, monthly WFP-operated chartered humanitarian flights were the only way

in/out of Timor-Leste.) In a least developed country (LDC) with a fragile health system, I was dedicated to coordinating the UN's support for COVID-19 socio-economic response, as well as supporting the health and wellness of UN staff and their families.

Finally, there is a reason why I always found it easy to work in every country that I have served over the past 20 years: when meeting national staff or government officials for the first time, they often say “Are you Japanese? I used to work with a Japanese named X, and he/she was a great person.” The reasons they would give for the “greatness” of these Japanese people were usually “competence,” “hard working,” and “humility.” One might think that there is no place for humility when working at a highly competitive organization like the UN. In my experience, however, national staff and government officials, especially those who have worked with many international staff in the field, value the humility of Japanese people. I am grateful to have benefited from the “greatness” of previous generations of Japanese UN staff and the welcome I received in every duty station. For my part, I hope to pay it forward by continuing to serve with sincerity and optimism.



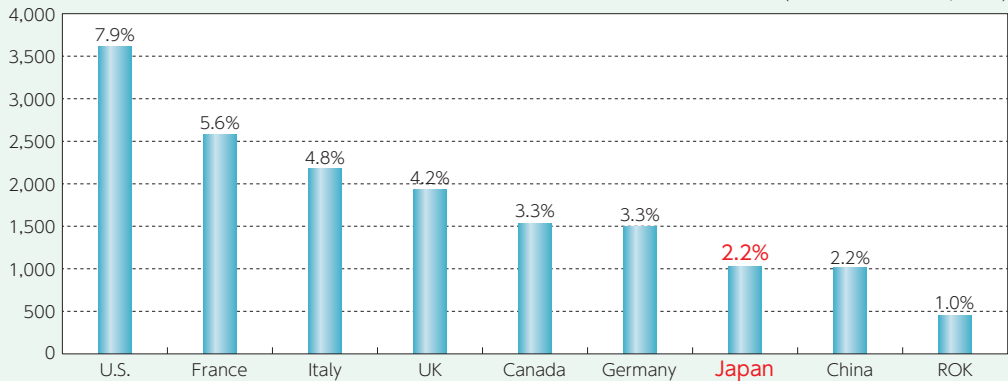
A lecture on the SDGs delivered to students at the National University of Timor-Leste. Young people in every country give me energy and hope. (The author is first row center, March 21, Timor-Leste, ©Chang Won Choi)



The author reading out an outcome declaration at an international conference on mine action in Azerbaijan (May 2023, Azerbaijan, © UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Azerbaijan)

Number of Staff Members at UN-related Agencies by Nationality (professional or higher)

(As of December 31, 2022)



Note 1: This graph includes the number of professional staff members or higher with a term of one year or longer.

Note 2: The percentage represents the ratio against the total number of employees (45,760).

Note 3: Calculation method differs from that of MOFA.

Source: Created by MOFA from UN document (CEB/2023/HLCM/HR/4)

Justice (ICJ), the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), and the International Criminal Court (ICC). In light of the importance of international organizations for addressing global challenges, securing the top and other important posts that contribute to strengthening ties between Japan and international organizations, is an important challenge. On the other hand, the top and other important posts of international organizations are not something that can be secured overnight. It is necessary to make a finely tuned response by adopting a long-term perspective while cultivating suitable personnel.

Currently, 961 Japanese nationals (as of the end of 2022; figures gathered by MOFA) are working as professional-level or higher-level staff in UN-related agencies around the world, which is a record figure. With the aim of further increasing Japanese personnel, the Government of Japan has set a target of 1,000 Japanese nationals working for UN-related agencies by 2025. To this end, in collaboration with universities, related ministries and agencies, and organizations, MOFA is actively recruiting, training and supporting Japanese nationals who can continue working in the international organizations and make a contribution on the global stage. As part of these efforts, MOFA runs the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme, which sends young Japanese nationals to positions in international organizations for a term of two years, with the aim of gaining regular staff positions in such organizations after the term. MOFA also runs a program to support the advancement of Japanese nationals who can be future managerial candidates by offering them mid-career and higher professional experience. In addition to encouraging the employment of more Japanese nationals through these efforts, MOFA is also working to coordinate with international organizations and gather information for the recruitment and promotion of Japanese staff.

For Japanese nationals who wish to work for international organizations, the MOFA Recruitment Center for International Organizations continually provides useful information of vacancy announcements at international organizations on its official website and through mailing lists, social media such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and LinkedIn, as well as video sharing platforms such as YouTube. In addition, the MOFA Recruitment Center for International Organizations works on publicity to

provide online career seminars explaining the attractiveness of working at international organizations and methods to apply for a job, and also online explanatory sessions with invited senior Japanese staff working for international organizations and human resource specialists from international organizations.

MOFA will continue to encourage the recruitment of more Japanese nationals working in international organizations and support their promotion, so that a larger number of competent Japanese nationals who have high aspirations and passion to contribute to solving global issues can take part in international organizations.

(2) Activities of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

A Development Cooperation

From the perspective of developing a diplomacy by concerted national effort through leveraging the capabilities of organizations other than the Government, there is growing significance in roles that NGOs can play in carrying out support activities for developing countries in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

Through NGOs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) actively provides Official Development Assistance (ODA) via financial cooperation in the form of grant assistance (Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects) for economic and social development projects implemented by Japanese NGOs in developing countries and regions. The projects cover a wide range of assistance, including health, medical and hygienic care (e.g., maternal-child health, tuberculosis measures, water and sanitation), rural development (e.g., improvement of agricultural environments and livelihoods), support for people with disabilities (e.g., vocational training and employment support), education (e.g. school construction), disaster risk reduction, and countermeasures for landmines and unexploded ordnances (UXO). In FY2022, MOFA provided funding for 117 projects to Japanese NGOs (57 organizations) implementing Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects in 41 countries and regions in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Moreover, the NGO Project Subsidies are provided to improve the project execution capabilities and expertise of NGOs and to support activities that contribute to the promotion of NGO projects.

Additionally, Japan Platform (JPF) was established in 2000 with the aim of conducting emergency humanitarian assistance more effectively and promptly through cooperation and partnerships among the Government, NGOs, and business communities at the time of large-scale natural disasters or conflicts. As of the end of December 2023, 47 NGOs are members of JPF. In 2023, JPF implemented response programs that included assistance to earthquake victims in southeastern Türkiye; assistance to victims of Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar; humanitarian crisis assistance in Sudan; emergency assistance for a large fire in Maui, Hawaii; assistance to earthquake victims in central Morocco; assistance to earthquake victims in western Afghanistan; humanitarian crisis response assistance in Gaza; and emergency response for Afghanistan returnees. Assistance was also provided to refugees and internally displaced persons in Ukraine and neighboring countries; Myanmar, Bangladesh, South Sudan and neighboring countries; and Ethiopia, Yemen, Pakistan, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Iraq/Syria and neighboring countries.

In this way, NGOs assume important roles in the area of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Positioning such NGOs as strategic partners in international cooperation, MOFA and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) provide indirect support for NGO activities through various policy measures aimed at enhancing their capability and expertise as well as developing human resources so that NGOs can strengthen the foundation for their activities and perform further tasks. In 2023, MOFA implemented four programs—namely, the “NGO Consultant Scheme,” “NGO Study Program,” “NGO Intern Program,” and “NGO Study Group.”

The plenary meeting of the NGO-MOFA Regular Consultation Meeting, the purpose of which is to promote dialogue and coordination between NGOs and MOFA, was held in November 2022. Meetings of the Partnership Promotion Committee, a subcommittee, were held in July and December 2022 and March 2023, while ODA Policy Council meetings were held in July and November 2022 and March 2023. Furthermore, an extraordinary plenary session was held in September 2022 where a lively exchange of views took place regarding revisions to the Development Cooperation Charter. In addition, recognizing the indispensable



The objects in the women's hands are farming tools for home vegetable gardens that were distributed through a project to support improved child nutrition. “I look forward to using it for field work. I hope to grow leafy greens to give to my kids,” she says with a smile. (Madagascar; Photo: AMDA Multisectoral & Integrated Development Services)

role of multi-stakeholder partnerships in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), MOFA has been actively exchanging views with various stakeholders, including NGOs, at the “SDGs Promotion Roundtable Meeting” since September 2016. In March 2023, private sector members of the SDGs Promotion Roundtable Meeting submitted a proposal to the Government regarding the SDGs Implementation Guiding, Principles, sparking a lively exchange of views at the Roundtable and other meetings.

B Partnership in Other Major Diplomatic Areas

The Government of Japan holds dialogues with civil society including NGO representatives and experts on matters related to government reports to be submitted based on various human rights treaties, as well as on the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, and the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, which is based on UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1325 and related resolutions.

In the area of conventional weapons, MOFA works in cooperation with NGOs in implementing clearance of mines and UXOs, and mine risk education projects, in countries affected by mines and UXOs.

Furthermore, in the area of nuclear disarmament, MOFA has been conducting dialogues with various NGOs and experts. The Government supports the activities of NGOs and others to convey the realities of nuclear weapons use to the international community, through the commissioned projects known as the “Special Communicator for a World without Nuclear

COLUMN

Collaboration between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Civil Society - C7 Activities

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has traditionally worked with various NGOs and other civil society organizations in providing ODA. In addition to this, MOFA engages in dialogue with various organizations in order to obtain active involvement from civil society on the diverse agendas discussed by G7 leaders. This column introduces the activities of the Civil 7 (C7), which made policy recommendations to G7 leaders from a civil society perspective prior to the G7 Hiroshima Summit, and its collaboration with MOFA.

Every year, the C7 organizes a “C7 Summit” in advance of the G7 Summit, with civil society organizations from the G7 Presidency serving as the secretariat, to compile policy recommendations to the G7. In May 2022, the “Japan Civil Society Coalition on G7 Summit 2023” was launched by Japanese NGOs as a secretariat organization for the C7 Summit to be held the following year. When Japan assumed the G7 Presidency in January 2023, six specialized working groups comprising over 700 participants from 72 countries were established in the C7: (1) Nuclear Disarmament, (2) Climate and Environmental Justice, (3) Economic Justice and Transformation, (4) Global Health, (5) Humanitarian Assistance and Conflict, and (6) Open and Resilient Societies. The outcome of the discussions was compiled into policy recommendations titled “Design and Implement Sustainable Policies for Peace, Prosperity, and Transparency,”¹ which was handed to Prime Minister Kishida on the day before the C7 Summit. The C7 Summit was held in Tokyo on April 13 and 14 with the participation of civil society representatives from various countries, and the opening ceremony was attended by State Minister for Foreign Affairs YAMADA Kenji. During the G7 Hiroshima Summit, which took place from May 19 to 21, more than 50 press conferences and advocacy activities were held at NGO activity centers set up in Hiroshima City, and civil society insights were provided on many issues facing the international community. This is a good example of how MOFA and civil society can work more closely together by tightly coordinating toward the common goal of a successful C7-related event.

As these efforts suggest, cooperation between MOFA and civil society is very important. The Development Cooperation Charter decided by the Cabinet in June positions civil society as “a strategic partner in Japan’s development cooperation” and is expected to see NGOs and other civil society organizations work more closely with the government. Furthermore, input from civil society is extremely useful in addressing the urgent issues facing the international community, and not just those involving development cooperation. This collaboration between the C7 and MOFA has greatly contributed to strengthening cooperation between the two parties. After passing the baton of the G7 Presidency to Italy, MOFA will continue to work with civil society and take advantage of its knowledge toward formulating and implementing foreign policy.



Courtesy call on Prime Minister Kishida by C7 officials and presentation of policy recommendations (April 12, Prime Minister’s Office; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)



C7 Summit participants pose for a commemorative photo with their right hand making the letter “C” (April 13, Tokyo)



Press conference held by the C7 during the G7 Hiroshima Summit (May 21, Hiroshima City)

¹ See here for policy recommendations
https://civil7.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/C7_communique2023_0412.pdf



Weapons” and the “Youth Communicator for a World without Nuclear Weapons.” As of December 2023, a total of 312 Special Communicators on 103 occasions and a total of 697 Youth Communicators on 48 occasions have been dispatched to the world through these commission programs.

Concerning the countermeasures against transnational organized crime, in order to promote public-private cooperation especially on trafficking in persons, the Government exchanges opinions with NGOs regarding recent trends of trafficking in persons and effective measures to appropriately address this crime.

(3) Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, Experts and Others

The Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV, JICA Volunteer Program) is a JICA program in which Japanese nationals from 20 to 69 years of age with skills, knowledge, and experience provide cooperation and assistance for economic and social development of the communities in developing countries while living, working and fostering mutual understanding with local people in developing countries. As of the end of March 2023, 55,385 JOCVs have been dispatched to 99 countries in total since the program's launch in 1965. The dispatched volunteers have been engaged in about 190 types of work in nine sectors: planning/administration, commerce/tourism, public utility works, human resources, agriculture/forestry/

fishery, health/medical care, mining, social welfare, and energy. MOFA and JICA are also promoting efforts to utilize the knowledge and experience of ex-volunteers in Japanese society such as educational sites, local communities, and private companies. This unique participatory volunteer program of Japan has been highly appreciated both within and outside of Japan, including recipient countries (See Column on this page).

JICA experts with specialized knowledge, skills, and experience are dispatched to governmental agencies and sites of development cooperation in developing countries. The experts, providing high-level policy recommendations and transferring necessary skills and knowledge to government officials and engineers of the partner countries, work together with their counterparts to develop, promote and disseminate technologies and systems that are suitable to each country's context. These experts, who actively engage in a wide range of sectors, including those addressing basic human needs such as health/medical care and water/sanitation, and those of socio-economic development such as legal system development and formulation of urban planning, contribute to the economic and social development of developing countries and the fostering of mutual trust between Japan and these countries. A total of 7,713 experts were newly dispatched to 103 countries and regions in FY2022, showing a recovery to the level prior to the global outbreak of COVID-19.

COLUMN

Considering the Way of “Forest Conservation” through On-site Interaction

KEGASA Takahiro, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer (JOCV) of JICA Volunteer Program (Specialty: Forestry and Forest Conservation), Country: Peru

In the summer of 2019, I was accepted into Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) of the JICA Volunteer Program, and at the beginning of the following year, just as I completed pre-departure training and my preparations were in place, my departure was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I finally arrived in Peru, the country I was posted in, in August 2022. I was assigned to the office for the Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu, SERNANP (National Service of Protected Natural Areas by the State) in the Region of Cusco, where I began activities to restore forests degraded by forest fires. From the early days of my assignment, I visited tree planting sites as well as a number of villages in an effort to seek a way to preserve the forests together with



Group photo with colleagues from SERNANP's office for the Alto Mayo Protected Forest (the author is fifth from the left)

local residents. In the midst of this, due to the escalation of protests in southern Peru, including the Region of Cusco following the dismissal of the former president in December 2022, I was forced to evacuate to the capital city of Lima, where I spent three months. My wish to return to Cusco was not fulfilled in the end, and I was then reassigned to the SERNANP's office for the Alto Mayo Protected Forest.

I vividly remember arriving at my new post in Rioja Province, San Martín, amidst a whirlwind of mixed emotions: regret for Cusco, anxiety over a new life in another place, and joy of being finally able to settle myself to start my work. Since we had a limited accumulation of data on native tree species in the vast 182,000 hectares of the protected area, the project began with a monitoring survey of representative native tree species with a view to developing an afforestation plan. In this area, coffee production through agroforestry (planting trees, raising livestock, and cultivating crops among the trees) is thriving. I visit local farmers to ask about their knowledge of the usefulness of each tree species (medicinal trees, fertilizer trees, shade trees, etc.) which they have accumulated through many years of experience, and I try to build up a store of systematic information that will be useful for their future lives. Meanwhile, since the voluntary cooperation of local residents is essential for effective forest conservation, I feel the need to secure their livelihoods as the foundation for such cooperation. As such, in cooperation with the office I am assigned to, NGOs, local government offices, universities, and others, I am working to improve local residents' quality of life through holding workshops for elementary and junior high schools, farmers' associations in protected areas, and women's self-governing committees, not only aiming to raise awareness of the environment, but also covering any necessary topics from marketing, ways to make improvements through "observation, analysis, and judgment," to nutrition education. Although what I can contribute is neither numerous nor huge, I am working with the hope that the knowledge I have brought from Japan could be of help in the development of this region.

When I was struggling with differences in language and customs, and when I was frustrated by the change of assignment, it was my colleagues, host families, friends, and local residents who supported me. Meeting these people has been an invaluable asset to my experience as a JOCV, and I will continue to work at maximum output for the rest of my term as a way to repay them for their favor.



Conducting a class on the importance of conserving water resources at an elementary school near the protected area (the author is in the back on the right)



Going door-to-door to interview members of the women's self-governing committee of a village near the protected area (the author is on the left)

3 Cooperation with Local Governments

Regional revitalization is one of the priority issues of the Cabinet. MOFA also actively works on the issue and strives to deploy measures that strengthen comprehensive diplomatic capabilities through collaboration with regions.

In Japan, as part of efforts to support regional revitalization, the Foreign Minister and respective prefectural governors invite members of diplomatic corps to Japan, foreign chambers of commerce and industry, and company representatives in Japan, among others, to the Iikura House, co-hosting receptions and setting up booths as means of broadly promoting the various charms of regions to audiences both in Japan and abroad. In 2023, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Tochigi Prefecture co-hosted a reception

in March, which was attended by approximately 190 guests. Foreign Minister Hayashi introduced the diverse attractions of Tochigi Prefecture's tourism destinations and specialty products such as strawberries, and asked the participants, including diplomatic corps in Japan, for their cooperation in spreading the word about these wonderful attractions through social media and other means. At the reception, booths were set up to introduce Tochigi Prefecture's specialty products; tourism; industry; the G7 Ministerial Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Nikko, Tochigi; and Host Town exchanges, and various attractions were promoted through events that included a *gagaku* (ancient Japanese court music) performance of Nikko Toshogu Shrine. This reception was an opportunity to promote further exchanges between Tochigi Prefecture and event participants, including



Foreign Minister Hayashi addressing the co-hosted reception with the Governor of Tochigi Prefecture (March 24, Iikura House, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo)

diplomatic corps, foreign chambers of commerce and industry and company representatives.

Furthermore, Foreign Minister Hayashi and State Minister for Foreign Affairs TAKEI Shunsuke conducted the “Local to Global” project to promote the attractiveness of regional areas of Japan worldwide. Through the project, the Foreign Minister and State Minister for Foreign Affairs visit Japan’s regions together with members of diplomatic corps in Japan. The project provides opportunities for diplomatic corps to experience the attractiveness and gain a better understanding of a region through communication with local people, with the goal of encouraging those participating diplomatic corps to disseminate their experience with the people of their own countries, promoting inbound demand. The project also aims at further stimulating local economies through dialogues between the Foreign Minister and local residents (See Section 3,1(4) on page 365). Together with diplomatic corps in Japan, project members visited Okayama Prefecture in February, Akita Prefecture in June, and Nagano Prefecture in August.

Moreover, MOFA, together with local governments and others, co-organizes Regional Promotion Seminars to disseminate local policies and attractive points, such as local products, tourism, industry, and investment, for members of diplomatic corps to Japan, foreign chambers of commerce and industry, related companies, and other organizations. The seminar, held in Tokyo on October 19, was attended by representatives from Nara Prefecture, Shizuoka Prefecture, Koriyama City in Fukushima Prefecture, and Ishioka City in Ibaraki Prefecture. The seminar included presentations



“Local to Global” Project: Foreign Minister Hayashi and his delegation visiting the Akita City Folk Performing Arts Heritage Center (June 17, Akita Prefecture)



Presentation by a participating local government organization at a Regional Promotion Seminar (October 19, Tokyo)

on regional attractions, an introduction to local specialties, tourist spots, and the local industry through exchange sessions with participants, and demonstrations of traditional culture. These events were received by attendees as valuable opportunities to directly experience the attractiveness of regional Japan while being in Tokyo. They also contributed to promoting exchanges among local governments and participants of diplomatic corps and others.

Furthermore, MOFA and Japanese local governments co-organize “Diplomats’ Study Tours” for the diplomatic corps in Japan, with the goal of enabling them to directly experience the attractions of each region by actually visiting them. On July 18 and 19, participating members of diplomatic corps toured Kitakyushu City, Fukuoka Prefecture. There, they visited companies that represent Kitakyushu as a manufacturing city and companies that are highly advanced with regard to the environment. They also deepened their understanding of Kitakyushu’s food culture, which makes use of local ingredients. During a tour to Fukushima Prefecture on August 2



Diplomatic corps visiting Kokura Castle (Diplomats' Study Tour)(July 19, Fukuoka Prefecture)

and 3, the members of diplomatic corps visited mainly the Hamadori region, which was directly affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake, and deepened their understanding of the situation at the time of the earthquake, the current state of reconstruction in Fukushima, and the appeal of safe and delicious food from Fukushima. On October 12 and 13, MOFA conducted a tour to Sado City, Niigata Prefecture. The diplomatic corps visited facilities to experience the cultural value and history of the “Sado Island Gold Mines,” which is being nominated for inscription as a World Heritage site. They also enjoyed other aspects of Sado Island’s diverse attractions, including its food, traditional arts, and nature, as well as *sake* production, as the Government of Japan also aims to inscribe “Traditional knowledge and skills of *sake*-making with *koji* mold in Japan” as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. During a tour to Shizuoka Prefecture conducted on November 28 and 29, the diplomatic corps gained a better understanding of the diverse attractions of the prefecture, which was selected as the Culture City of East Asia 2023, by visiting facilities related to its history, culture, arts, cuisine, nature, and manufacturing industry, which is one of Japan’s largest such industries. As a result of the tours, some local governments have started new exchanges with participating countries, while others have aimed to increase the number of visitors to such communities by utilizing connections with participating diplomatic corps.

Moreover, MOFA provides local governments with explanations of Japan’s current diplomatic policies, etc., that relate closely to international exchange activities at the regional level. As part of these activities, MOFA held the “Local Partnership Cooperation Forum” in



Exchange meeting hosted by Fukushima Prefecture (Diplomats' Study Tour) (August 2, Fukushima Prefecture)



Diplomatic corps visiting Doyu no Warito (Diplomats' Study Tour)(October 13, Niigata Prefecture)



Diplomatic corps visiting Kunozan Toshogu Shrine (Diplomats' Study Tour) (November 28, Shizuoka Prefecture)

January as a webinar. The first part of the briefings on foreign policy and other matters focused on the theme of “Overseas Promotion Strategy after COVID-19” while the second part saw outside experts speak on the theme of “Promotion for SDGs in Japanese local area.”

With regard to projects overseas, as a way to counter international reputational damage stemming from the Great East Japan Earthquake, MOFA conducts a comprehensive PR program called “Project to Support Overseas Presentations to Promote the Attractiveness of Regions,” together with efforts to lift and ease import restrictions including online PR activities in China and Hong Kong from July 2023 to March 2024. During this period, the 40 participating local governments posted short movies filmed in various locations in Japan by the Weibo (Chinese social media) account of the Embassy of Japan in China to enable a large number of people to know and experience the attractiveness of each region, including tourism, culture, and food in Japan, through social media. In addition, Japanese local governments introduced food and crafts at events organized by the Embassy of Japan in China. MOFA also sent influencers to events held throughout China to promote the attractiveness of Japan's regions and held a promotion event for Tohoku and other regions at a book fair in Hong Kong in July.

Furthermore, MOFA conducted nine “Regional Promotion Projects” aimed at supporting local governments in expanding sales channels for local products and promoting inbound tourism by making use of Japan's diplomatic facilities overseas to promote the attractiveness of each region.

In addition, on the occasion of the receptions for celebrating the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor, which are held at diplomatic missions overseas every year, Japanese attractions such as local products and events are presented. In 2023, due to a relaxation of various restrictions prompted by COVID-19, 234 diplomatic missions overseas held these receptions in-person, 114 of which promoted the attractiveness of local governments of Japan.



Local government's PR video shared by the social media account of the Embassy of Japan in China as part of the “Project to Support Overseas Presentations to Promote the Attractiveness of Regions”

Furthermore, MOFA has been supporting international exchanges between both Japanese and foreign local governments through various initiatives such as sister-city exchanges between Japanese local governments and their counterparts overseas and the Host Town Initiative for the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020. Specifically, in order to support the international activities of local governments and municipal communities, Japanese diplomats visit sister cities of Japanese municipalities in their assigned countries or regions and share opinions with officials responsible for international and economic affairs. The heads of Japanese diplomatic missions also visit local municipalities in Japan to have dialogues on the activities related to the sister city or the Host Town Initiative or deliver lectures prior to their departure for new posts or when they temporarily return to Japan. In cases where any foreign local governmental bodies wish to newly establish sister-city relationships with any Japanese municipal communities, MOFA supports them by providing the related information to the respective prefectures and ordinance-designated cities, and conducting indirect support by promoting these regional cooperation initiatives on the website of “Local Partnership Cooperation” (named “Glocal (global and local) Diplomatic Network”¹) on MOFA's website.

In addition to the “Glocal Diplomatic Network,” as public relations media for showcasing regional cooperation initiatives, MOFA also distributes Monthly Glocal News,² a monthly e-mail newsletter, and posts information via X (formerly Twitter).³ Via these PR

¹ “Glocal Diplomatic Network,” MOFA website:

https://www.mofa.go.jp/ms/lpc/page25e_000167.html

² Local Partnership Cooperation Division's e-mail newsletter “Monthly Glocal News”:

https://www.mofa.go.jp/ms/lpc/page25e_000219.html

³ Local Partnership Cooperation Division

X (formerly Twitter): <https://twitter.com/localmofa>

1



2



3



media, MOFA presents information on its regional cooperation programs, sister city exchanges, Host Town exchanges, and regional international activities promoted by local governments.

Additionally, as part of the overseas promotion activities for Japanese alcoholic beverages (Japanese *sake*, wine, *shochu*, *awamori*, etc.) produced in various parts of Japan, the diplomatic missions overseas are actively promoting Japanese alcoholic beverages by offering tasting occasions at dinners and lunches with government leaders of the assigned countries or foreign diplomatic corps, and by using Japanese *sake* on the occasion of making toasts at grand events such as the receptions for celebrating the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor. On these occasions, diplomatic missions overseas call attention to the fact that Japan has proposed “Traditional knowledge and skills of

sake-making with *koji* mold in Japan” for inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2024.

In providing ODA, MOFA also utilizes the experience and expertise of Japanese local governments as well as the products and technologies of local SMEs, in areas of increasing needs due to rapid economic growth in developing countries, such as water treatment, waste disposal, urban transportation and anti-pollution measures. In addition, JICA provides support for matching such needs of developing countries with Japanese companies’ products and technologies. These efforts contribute to the global expansion of Japanese local companies and the development of globally competent human resources, and thus lead to vitalization of Japan’s regional and national economies.

2

Supporting Japanese Nationals Overseas

1 Risks and Safety of Japanese Nationals Overseas

(1) Incidents and Accidents in 2023 and Responses to them

As of 2023, approximately 9.62 million¹ Japanese nationals traveled overseas over the course of the year, and as of October that year approximately 1.29 million Japanese nationals live abroad. Protecting the lives of Japanese nationals traveling and residing abroad, as well as promoting their interests, is one of the most important missions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

There has been no Japanese victim of terrorism incidents since 2020. However, 2023 was another year in which a large number of terrorist attacks occurred in various regions. The main terrorism incidents included a suicide bombing in Ankara, Türkiye (September), a mass stabbing in Arras, France (October), shootings in Brussels, Belgium (October), and an attack on foreign tourists at a national park in Uganda (October). Moreover, terrorism incidents occurred frequently in the Middle East, such as in Iraq, Syria, Israel, and Afghanistan, as well as in Pakistan in Southwest Asia. Furthermore, many terrorism incidents occurred in Africa, such as in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, and Mozambique.

In recent years, terrorist attacks have been occurring not only in the Middle East and Africa but also in Europe, North America, and Asia, where many Japanese nationals travel and reside. There continues to be a large number of homegrown terrorist attacks perpetrated by those born in Western countries and indoctrinated with extremist ideologies through websites or other means, terrorist attacks perpetrated by those acting on their own with little organizational

background, and terrorist attacks in locations where unspecified large numbers of the general public gather on a daily basis. In North America and Europe, violent acts by far-left and far-right radicals, such as hate crimes motivated by animosity toward a particular race or ethnic group, have been intensifying in frequency. Moreover, the threat of terrorism is increasing due to reasons such as Islamic extremists expanding their scope of activities around the globe.

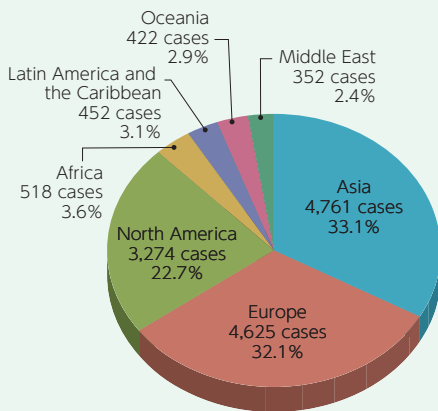
International travel rebounded rapidly in 2023 as the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic showed signs of easing. The number of people traveling overseas accordingly showed an increasing trend compared to 2022 (approximately 2.77 million people). While the number of incidents in which Japanese nationals fell victim to crimes was low compared to before the pandemic, such incidents as well as traffic and mountain-climbing accidents continued to occur worldwide.

Natural disasters also occurred around the world and caused great damage. These included earthquakes in Türkiye (February), Morocco (September), and Afghanistan (October); wildfires in Hawaii, U.S. (August); and flooding in Libya (September).

In Africa, political turmoil occurred one after another in Niger (July) and in Gabon (August). In addition, clashes occurred in Sudan between government troops and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), principally around the capital, Khartoum. The Government of Japan accordingly raised the risk level for these countries, supporting the evacuation of Japanese nationals in April using Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and government-chartered aircrafts. In the Middle East, terrorist attacks on Israel by Palestinian insurgents have grown into a large-scale conflict. In response, the Government of Japan raised the risk level for Israel, supporting Japanese nationals to leave the country using government-chartered and SDF aircrafts (October to November).

¹ Source: Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)

Breakdown of statistics for support to overseas Japanese nationals in 2022 by region



Source: 2022 Statistics on Assistance Provided by MOFA to Japanese Nationals Overseas

Whenever necessary, MOFA issues overseas travel safety information on infectious diseases in countries and regions where health and medical caution is required, in order to communicate the current outbreak situation and prevention measures, and highlight matters worth paying attention to when travelling and staying in the affected regions.

Regarding COVID-19 Travel Advice and Warning on Infectious Diseases, based on the situation including the broad improvement in the global infection situation and the World Health Organization (WHO) decision on May 5, 2023 that COVID-19 no longer constitutes a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC), MOFA lifted Level 1 (Exercise Caution) on May 8 for the entire world. MOFA will continue to provide information to Japanese nationals residing or traveling abroad via its websites and consular e-mails in a timely and appropriate manner. In 2023, cases of Marburg virus disease infection were confirmed in Equatorial Guinea and Tanzania, in response to which MOFA issued region-specific information. Mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue fever have spread widely throughout Central and South America, as well as spreading in Asia and Africa.

(2) Safety Measures for Japanese Nationals Overseas

The number of Japanese nationals receiving support or protection in 2022 from Japanese diplomatic missions

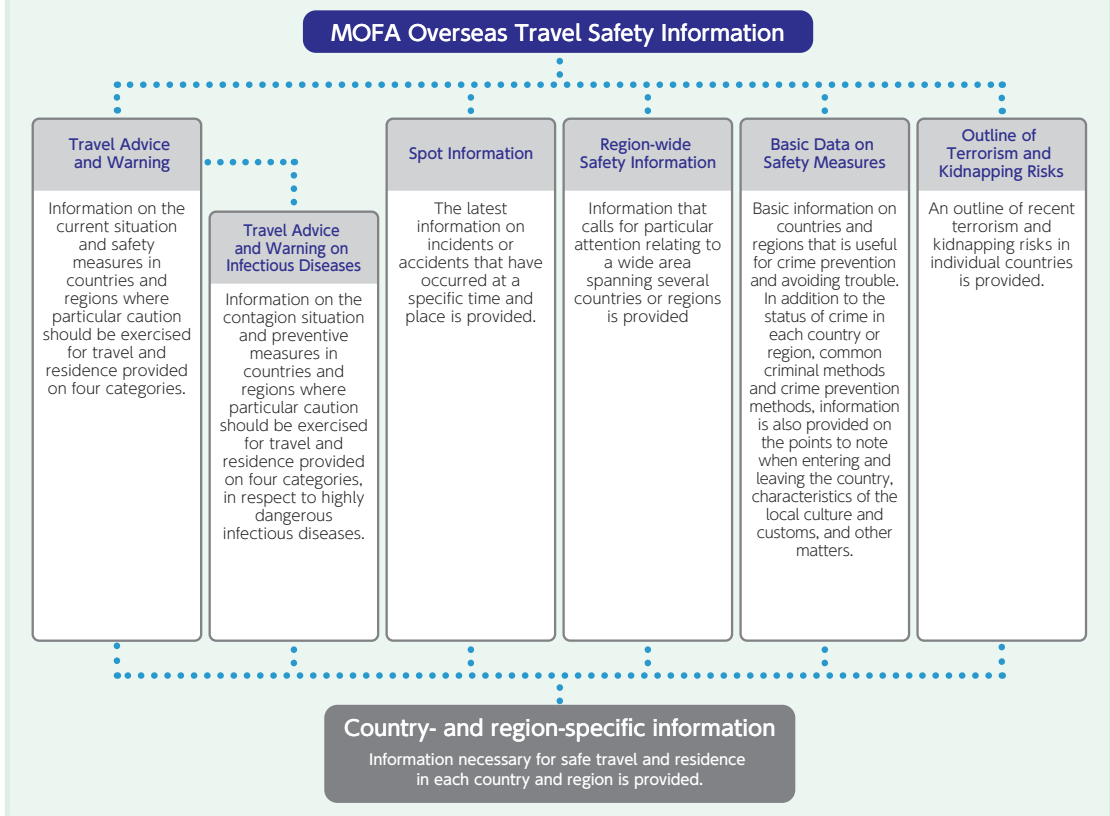
overseas and the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association was a total of 16,895, and the number of cases of support or protection was 14,404. Within these overall numbers, Japanese embassies and consulates-general worldwide provided detailed assistance in many ways such as support to Japanese nationals as well as disseminating information about entry/exit limitations and public safety.

The safety of Japanese nationals is threatened constantly in various regions throughout the world. Japanese nationals traveling abroad must be prepared for multiple risks such as terrorist attacks and infectious disease striking at the same time, and it is more difficult than ever to respond if Japanese travelers encounter a terrorist attack or another incident or accident while traveling overseas. Therefore, there is an increasing need to take every possible overseas safety measure.

Based on this perspective, MOFA works to enhance the safety awareness of Japanese nationals and promote its safety measures by disseminating information widely to the general public. Specifically, MOFA added panels to its Overseas Safety website page for easy access to the necessary information, and issues the latest safety information for each country and region on the website. Furthermore, MOFA sends emails on the latest safety information of travel destinations to Japanese residents and travelers who have registered with Overseas Residential Registrations or overseas travel registration service (Tabi-Regi).

MOFA is actively engaged in PR activities in order to promote registration on Tabi-Regi and submission of Overseas Residential Registrations. Examples of these initiatives include distributing information cards at all passport centers aimed at increasing awareness of Overseas Residential Registrations and Tabi-Regi, and thus raising their registration rate. In addition, in August, MOFA released a new promotional video on its official YouTube channel, in which the actors ISHIDA Hikari and MORITAKA Ai encourage registration on Tabi-Regi and submission of Overseas Residential Registrations. MOFA provides a Tabi-Regi linkage interface to travel industry operators, allowing them to batch register their passengers traveling abroad, and encourages companies to use it. Furthermore, MOFA contributed a booth to Tourism Expo Japan (Osaka) in October, providing information and raising attention to the safety of Japanese nationals residing or

Main Overseas Safety Information posted on MOFA's Overseas Safety Website (structure and overview)



traveling abroad, including about Overseas Residential Registrations and Tabi-Regi. As of December 2023, the number of travelers who had registered on Tabi-Regi since its launch in July 2014 exceeded 8.58 million, reflecting initiatives for enhancing the system's convenience and activities that aim at promoting registration.

MOFA strives to enhance the knowledge and capability of the Japanese people concerning overseas safety measures and crisis management through seminars and training. In 2023, MOFA held virtual and in-person seminars on safety measures inside and outside Japan (11 times at diplomatic missions overseas and 10 times within Japan). Furthermore, Consular Affairs Bureau staff delivered lectures at seminars held throughout Japan by domestic organizations, associations, and other groups. In addition, MOFA also provided regular overseas safety information through voice platforms.

Furthermore, MOFA held “Public-Private Joint Practical Training for Counter-Terrorism and Anti-Kidnapping Measures,” both within Japan and abroad, with the participation of Japanese businesses and



The actors ISHIDA Hikari and MORITAKA Ai introduce Tabi-Regi (for people traveling overseas for less than three months) and Overseas Residential Registrations (for people living overseas for three months or more)

organizations. The Joint Practical Training outside Japan had been on hold since September 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but restarted in 2023 after an approximately 3.5-year hiatus. These initiatives are useful in preventing harm from regular crimes and terrorism, but also in improving response capabilities in the event of encountering such an incident.

Furthermore, the public and private sectors are cooperating to advance safety measures even overseas, and the diplomatic missions in each country host



Overseas safety measures flyer (front)



Overseas safety measures flyer (back)

regular meetings of Security Consultation and Liaison Committees. Diplomatic missions are continuing to share information, exchange opinions, and bolster collaboration in preparation for emergencies with local Japanese nationals in their respective countries.

Following the terrorist attack in Dhaka in July 2016, MOFA developed and has utilized in educational activities “Golgo 13’s Security Guidelines for Japanese SMEs Abroad,” with the aim of raising the awareness of international cooperation personnel, as well as small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), students studying abroad, and short-term travelers, who have limited access to information on safety. Moreover, MOFA has continued to use the LINE messaging platform, through “Messages from Duke Togo” by the medium of “Golgo 13’s Security Guidelines for Japanese SMEs Abroad,” to distribute educational messages about security measures and useful knowledge for people to protect themselves.

For Japanese nationals traveling abroad for the first time such as people on business trips, travelers, and students studying abroad, MOFA has created posters and flyers with 2D codes (QR codes) for access to Tabi-Regi, the Overseas Safety website, and “Golgo 13’s Security Guidelines for Japanese SMEs Abroad,” distributing them to Japanese companies and the public.

Many educational institutions do not have a sufficient base of knowledge and experience regarding safety measures and emergency response procedures. Due to this, for Japanese students heading abroad to study, MOFA staff deliver lectures and provide safety measures courses, including online sessions, at educational institutions such as universities, and also request cooperation to increase the submission of Overseas

Residential Registrations and the rate of registration on Tabi-Regi. MOFA will continue to strive to help institutions to raise awareness of safety measures among their students and build in-house crisis management structures. MOFA is moving ahead with efforts to connect government agencies with educational institutions, overseas study agencies, and students studying abroad, by launching an automatic Tabi-Regi registration system together with some overseas study institutions.

2 Consular Service and Assistance for Japanese Living Overseas

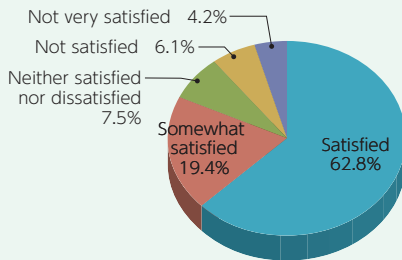
(1) Improving Consular Service and Promoting Digitalization

A Improving Consular Service

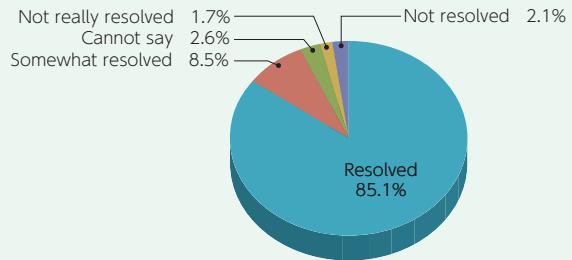
With the aim of providing quality consular services to Japanese nationals overseas, MOFA conducts a yearly questionnaire survey on services such as consular staff’s attitudes in over-the-counter and telephone Responses, as well as work implementation status at diplomatic missions overseas. The survey conducted in December 2023 covered 138 diplomatic missions overseas and received valid responses from 15,970 people. The survey results suggested that respondents were for the most part satisfied with the level of consular services provided by diplomatic missions overseas. Nevertheless, some respondents also submitted views that consular staff showed insufficient concern and understanding for users’ situations, including that staff seem to adopt matter-of-fact attitudes and terms of speech. MOFA takes such user feedback seriously, and will continue its

Results of questionnaire survey on users of consular services (FY2023: 138 diplomatic missions)

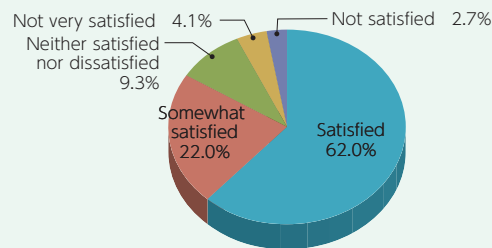
Overall, how satisfied are you with the consular services you have received?



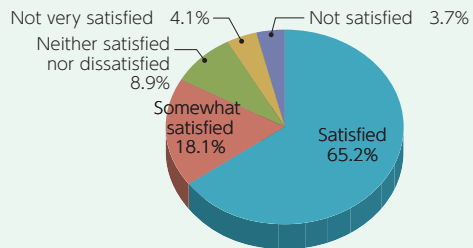
Has your problem (application, notification, consultations, etc.) been resolved through the use of consular services?



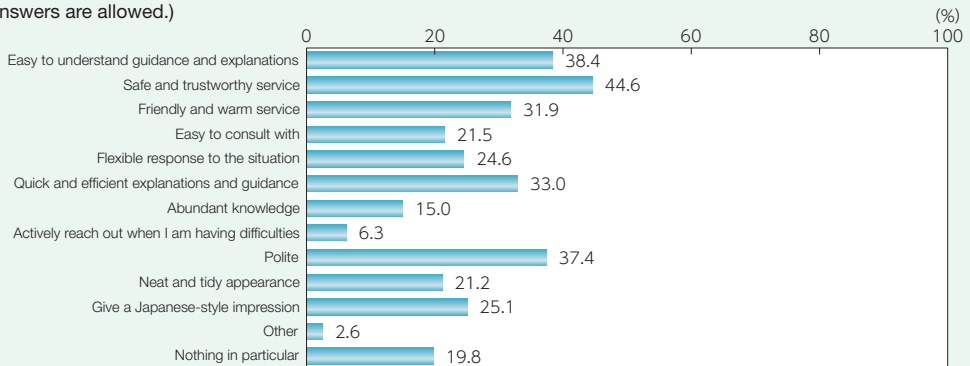
How satisfied are you with the knowledge of duties and processing speed of the consular services?



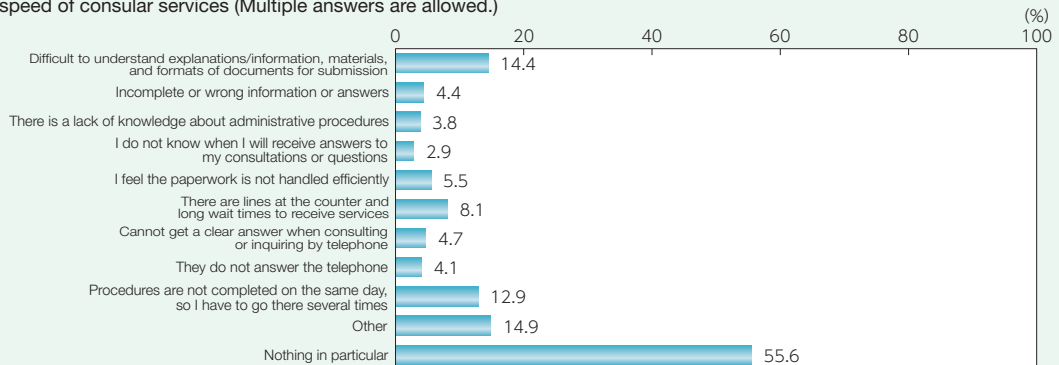
How satisfied are you with the customer service manners of staff while receiving consular services?



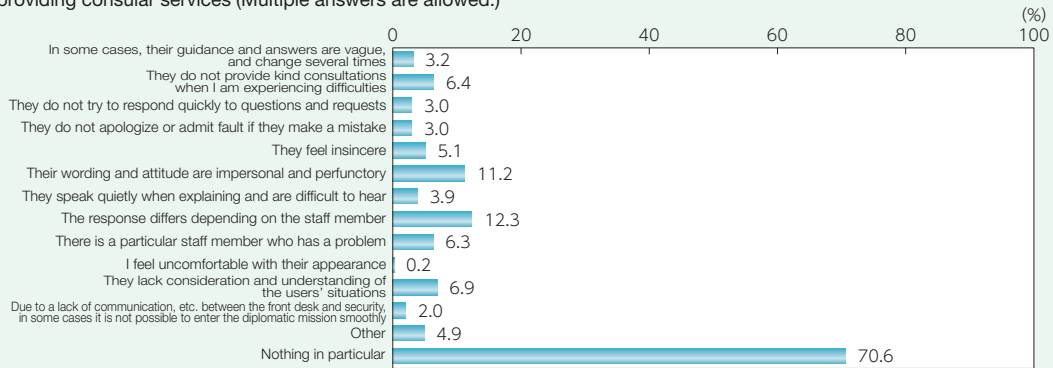
Survey results regarding aspects found to be “good” about the consular service, either at the counter or on the phone (Multiple answers are allowed.)



Survey results regarding aspects where improvement needs to be made about the knowledge and processing speed of consular services (Multiple answers are allowed.)



Survey results regarding aspects where improvement needs to be made about the customer service manners of staff providing consular services (Multiple answers are allowed.)



efforts to enhance services and make improvements so as to provide better consular services that are oriented to the perspective of its users.

B Promoting Digitalization

In order to improve user convenience and streamline consular work processes, MOFA has been working to digitalize consular procedures such as expanding online application for consular services and online payment for consular fees. Specifically, the Ministry began accepting online application for passports, certificates, and visas, and online payment for these consular fees by credit card from March 27 (See the Column on this page). The number of Japanese diplomatic

missions overseas and procedures for which online application is available have been gradually expanded, and on July 10, 2023, online credit card payment for online application has been enabled in principle at all Japanese diplomatic missions overseas. In addition, the Consular Digital Transformation Division was established on April 1 within the Consular Affairs Bureau of MOFA in order to accelerate these initiatives. MOFA intends to strengthen the consular policy implementation structure by creating an environment in which consular officers can focus on work in which human response is critical, such as protecting Japanese nationals, by means of digitalizing consular work.

COLUMN

Digitalization of Consular Services: Implementing Online Application and Payment for Passports, Certificates, and Visas

As well as providing protection for Japanese nationals overseas, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) is in charge of consular services such as issuing passports, certificates, and visas. The importance of those services has only grown with revitalization of cross-border travel since the COVID-19 pandemic subsided. Given this situation, MOFA has been working to digitalize consular services from the perspective of improving their convenience and streamlining work processes.

On March 27, MOFA launched an online application for passports, certificates, and visas, as well as credit card payment for these consular fees. Online application removes the need to visit an office, alleviating the burden for those living in remote areas. The application is also available at any time, making procedures more suited to each applicant's circumstances. At the same time, credit card payment is now also available when applying online, saving the trouble of bringing cash. The applicable procedures, as well as the prefectures and diplomatic missions overseas where online applications are available, are still limited, but will be gradually expanded.

This column introduces the application process, taking the example of online passport application. A staff member of the Passport Division, Consular Affairs Bureau of MOFA actually renewed his passport online, with help from Passpo-kun, Japan's passport mascot character.

* * * * *

This summer vacation, Passpo-kun and I are going to Palau, to see the beautiful ocean there.

I got my swim ring and swimsuit ready, and was reading a guidebook I just bought. It said that you would need at least six months' validity on your passport to enter Palau. I thought I'd better check my passport just in case - but I found it only has about three months left.

Oh no! I wouldn't be allowed to get on the plane due to my passport validity! If that happened, all my preparation would be for nothing. I quickly looked into the procedures on the MOFA and passport office websites. It looks like I can now renew my passport online.

Passpo-kun's passport had nearly expired too. I got in touch with him online to plan our trip, and we applied for renewal together. If you have your valid passport, Individual Number Card (when applying in Japan), and a smartphone, you can apply anywhere, anytime.

I activated the MynaPortal app, and selected apply for or renew passport. I checked what I needed and the application process, and answered each of the questions.

The app uses the smartphone's selfie camera to take your passport photo, and the built-in guide made it easy to get the face size right. You can also upload your own digital photo, but apparently there are limits to file formats and sizes. I was glad that online application saved me the hassle and cost of going to get my passport photo taken.

Next, I uploaded my signature image, and read in the data from my current passport. I inputted the necessary information, checked where I would pick up my new passport and when it would be issued, and it was done. Usually, you can pick up your passport in four to six days.

I was a little nervous as it was my first time using the online application, but it was so easy that I didn't have to take time off work during the weekday and queue up at the passport office! I was really relieved when all the procedures were completed.

I got a notification on MynaPortal five days later. After entering my credit card information online in advance, the card payment was finalized at the passport office¹, and I got my passport! I made my airplane ticket and hotel bookings, and I was good to go to Palau without any problems. I had a great time on holiday, while taking care not to lose my passport.

I'll keep my passport nice and safe, and look forward to my next trip.



¹ This service is gradually being rolled out by prefecture (as of December).

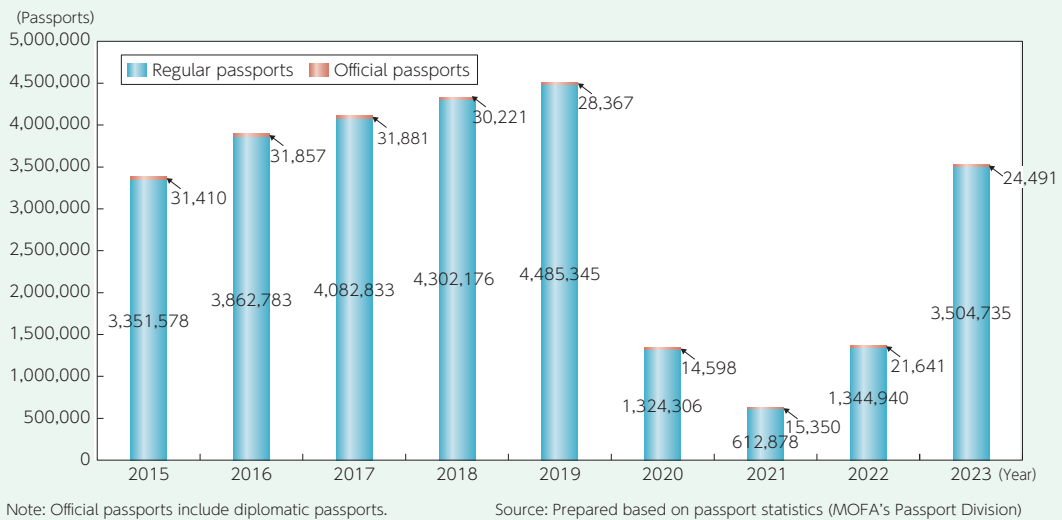
(2) Passports: Maintaining trust, enhancing convenience and making administrative tasks more efficient

In 2023, border and movement restrictions which had been imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, were eased in many countries, and the number of travelers and students overseas gradually recovered. At the end of 2023, the number of passport applications was returning to pre-pandemic levels. The number of passports issued in 2023 was 3.53 million, a 158.3% increase compared to 2022.

The online application system for passports, which began on March 27, 2023, is available in principle when applying to renew passports in Japan. Application

can be done via the Individual Number Portal website. Overseas, application is available from the ORR (Overseas Residential Registration) net online application system. Online application removes the burden for applicants to appear at a service counter in person. They can take the photos of their face and signature and upload them via a smartphone or other digital device. As of the end of 2023, approximately 31% of applicants for passport renewals in Japan used the online application. In addition, credit card payment for passport fees is now available in principle at all diplomatic missions overseas via online application, and is also being gradually implemented at prefectural passport centers. Moreover, MOFA is working on preparations to make referring to electronic family register

Changes in the number of passports issued



certificates possible from FY2024 through linkage with the Ministry of Justice's Family Register Information Linkage System. This will enable online application for new passports that currently require submission of a copy of a family register at the counter in person or by post.

Measures taken in 2020 such as upgrading the functions to prevent unauthorized reading of personal information contained in passport IC chips as well as adding the designs of the "Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji" by Katsushika Hokusai to the visa pages have made passports more resistant to forgery and alteration. However, unauthorized obtaining of passports by impersonating others continues to occur.² MOFA is upgrading measures to prevent unauthorized obtaining of passports by impersonation and obtaining multiple passports by introducing facial verification systems and verifying people's identities such as through in-person issuing. Looking ahead, MOFA will consider ways to further increase the trust of Japanese passports by making them more resistant to forgery and alteration based on the criteria considered at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which sets international standards for passports.

MOFA will continue to engage in maintaining the trust of Japanese passports while enhancing convenience

for applicants and making passport administration more efficient.

(3) Overseas Voting

The overseas voting system allows Japanese voters living overseas to vote in national elections. In order to vote through the overseas voting system, it is necessary to be registered in advance on the overseas voter directory managed by the election board of the city or town government and to obtain overseas voter identification. Starting in June 2018, in addition to the conventional method of applying through a diplomatic mission overseas after moving there, Japanese nationals can now apply at their municipal service counter at the same time as filing their notice of moving overseas. As a result, there is no longer a need to appear in person at a diplomatic mission overseas after moving outside Japan, which simplifies procedures. Voters can vote by choosing one of the three methods of voting, a) voting at diplomatic missions overseas, b) voting by mail, or c) voting in Japan.

The diplomatic missions overseas have been making efforts to spread the overseas voting system and to increase the number of registered voters by publicizing the overseas voting system to the territories under their jurisdiction and carrying out a visiting service for the

² Known cases of unauthorized obtaining of passports by impersonation were as follows: eight in 2019, three in 2020, three in 2021, three in 2022, and five in 2023.

registration of Japanese nationals living in remote areas. When elections are held, diplomatic missions overseas also handle overseas voting procedures, including advance PR activities. In 2022, for the 26th regular election of the House of Councillors, voting at diplomatic missions overseas was conducted for the 16th time involving 234 diplomatic missions and offices. In addition, the Act on National Review of Judges of the Supreme Court was partially revised (taking effect on February 17, 2023) and an Overseas Nationals Review System was established, enabling Japanese nationals residing overseas to exercise their right to review in the national review. In 2024, MOFA will continue its PR

and other activities to increase the number of registered voters and promote voting at diplomatic missions overseas.

(4) Assistance for Japanese Nationals Living and Engaging in Activities Overseas

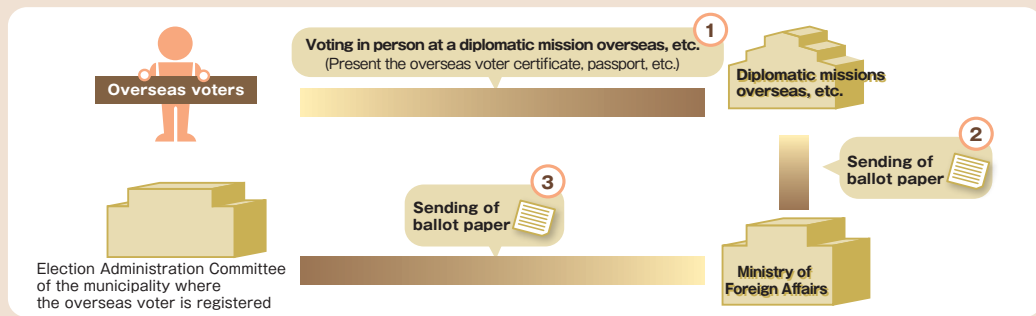
A Japanese Schools and Supplementary Education Schools

Education for children is one of the major concerns for Japanese nationals living abroad. Based on the Act Concerning the Promotion of Education at Overseas Japanese Educational Facilities, which was approved

Voting in elections for overseas voters

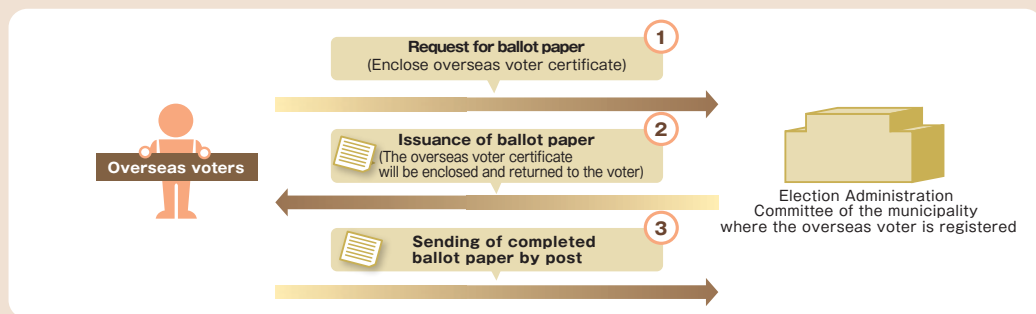
a. Voting at a diplomatic mission overseas

Voters who are registered on the overseas electoral roll may vote by presenting their overseas voter certificates, passports and other necessary documents to a diplomatic mission overseas set up as a polling station. (The period and time of voting differs depending on the diplomatic mission.)



b. Postal voting

Send the overseas voter certificate and request form for ballot paper to the chairperson of the Election Administration Committee of the municipality that you are registered with to request a ballot paper. Complete and return the ballot paper to the chairperson of the Election Administration Committee of the municipality, ensuring that the ballot paper reaches the polling station by the time the voting ends on the date of the election in Japan (8:00 p.m. Japan time). (Voting is carried out from the day after the date of public notice.)



c. Voting in Japan

In the case where the overseas voter returns temporarily to Japan at the time of the elections, or where the overseas voter is not yet registered on the electoral roll in Japan after returning to Japan, he or she may vote through the same voting methods as voters in Japan (early voting, absentee voting, voting on election day)

and took effect in 2022, as well as the spirit of the Constitution of Japan, MOFA cooperates with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) etc. to provide assistance to Japanese Schools (assistance for school building rental fees, remuneration for locally-hired teachers and instructors, safety measures expenses, etc.) so that the overseas school children at the age of compulsory education in Japan can receive a level of education equivalent to that in Japan. MOFA also provides the same level of assistance for Japanese Schools to Supplementary Education Schools (educational institutions established to maintain children's academic ability, such as Japanese language proficiency) mainly in areas where overseas Japanese educational facilities are not located.

In collaboration with MEXT, in April 2023 MOFA formulated the Basic Policy for Comprehensive and Effectively Advancing Measures Related to the Promotion of Education at Overseas Japanese Educational Facilities based on the Act Concerning the Promotion of Education at Overseas Japanese Educational Facilities.

B Medical/Health Measures

MOFA gathers information on outbreaks of infectious diseases overseas and provides information to a broad audience through the Overseas Safety website, websites of diplomatic missions overseas, emails, and other means. Furthermore, in order to provide health advice through consultations to Japanese nationals residing in countries where the medical situation is poor, MOFA dispatches medical teams with the cooperation of domestic medical institutions. MOFA also organizes health and safety lectures by medical specialists for regions where infectious diseases or air pollution are becoming serious issues.

C Responses to Other Needs

In order to eliminate the complexity of various procedures for Japanese nationals living overseas (such as converting Japanese driver's licenses, obtaining residence/work permits) and to make living abroad more comfortable, MOFA continues to engage with the authorities in the respective countries where Japanese nationals reside.

For example, when converting driver's licenses

issued in foreign countries to Japanese driver's licenses, all persons with driver's licenses issued in a foreign country are exempted from taking certain sections of the Japanese driver's license examination (theory/practical), when it has been confirmed that they have no problems with driving vehicles. On the other hand, as it is mandatory for Japanese nationals to take driving tests when converting Japanese driver's licenses to local licenses in some countries and states, MOFA is calling for those countries to simplify the procedures for license conversion to the same degree as in Japan.

MOFA also supports victims of atomic bombings living overseas in applying for the authorization of Atomic Bomb Diseases and for the issuance of Health Check Certificates, via diplomatic and consular missions.

Furthermore, MOFA is working to address issues of loneliness and social isolation among Japanese nationals residing overseas by liaising with NPOs in Japan to provide detailed assistance for individual cases.

3 Cooperation with Emigrants and Japanese Descendants (Nikkei)

The migration of Japanese nationals overseas has a history of 155 years, as of 2023. There are approximately five million overseas Japanese and Japanese descendants (Nikkei) around the world, with especially large numbers residing in North, Central, and South America. They make a significant contribution to the development of their countries of residence in various fields, including politics, economy, education, and culture, and at the same time, they act as a bridge between Japan and those countries in developing close relations.

Together with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), MOFA provides cooperation in Central and South America, where approximately 3.1 million Nikkei live. Various forms of assistance are offered, including welfare support for aging emigrants, training in Japan for Nikkei people, and dispatch of volunteers to the local Nikkei communities. MOFA is also working to further strengthen relationships with Nikkei communities based on the report submitted to the Minister for Foreign Affairs from the Panel of Experts on Collaborating with Communities of

Japanese Immigrants and their Descendants (“Nikkei”) in Central and South America in May 2017.

Thus far, invitation programs to Japan for current Nikkei leaders and young Nikkei who will be future leaders in various fields, and from various countries and regions, have been carried out in North, Central, and South America. Furthermore, efforts are underway to strengthen relations with Nikkei people in these regions through close cooperation between the diplomatic missions in each country and Nikkei communities, including actively creating opportunities for Japanese dignitaries from Japan to meet with Nikkei persons during their visits to these countries.

In October 2023, the 63rd Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad was held in person for the first time in four years. Foreign Minister Kamikawa hosted the welcome reception, engaging with the Nikkei attendees of many generations. MOFA intends to further strengthen collaboration with Nikkei communities in the future.

4 Implementation Status of the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (The Hague Convention)

The Hague Convention is designed as an international mechanism for addressing disputes arising from the wrongful removal or retention of children across borders in the belief that the interests of children are of paramount importance. It requires cooperation between Contracting States to the Convention for returning children to their state of habitual residence and establishing opportunities for transboundary parent-child access.

This Convention entered into force in Japan on April 1, 2014, with 103 countries, including Japan, parties to the Convention as of the end of December 2023.

The Convention is implemented through mutual cooperation among the governmental agencies designated as the Central Authority in Contracting States to the Convention. In Japan, MOFA as the Central

Authority avails itself of experts in various fields and provides assistance to both the parent whose child was removed and the parent who removed the child for the resolution of child removal cases, in communication and cooperation with foreign Central Authorities.

In the nine years and nine months since the entry into force of the Convention, MOFA received a total number of 556 applications by the end of December 2023: 371 applications seeking the return of the child and 185 applications seeking access to the child. Of the cases seeking the return of the child from Japan to another country, children were returned in 69 cases and conclusions were reached not to return the child in 52 cases. Of the cases requesting the return of the child from another country to Japan, children were returned in 68 cases and conclusions were reached not to return the child in 39 cases.

In order to build awareness of the Hague Convention among a broad public, MOFA holds online seminars and contributes articles to relevant local community press to raise awareness among Japanese nationals living overseas, as well as running seminars in Japan for local governments and relevant institutions such as bar associations. MOFA also puts efforts into PR activities by creating awareness-raising videos on the Hague Convention and posting them on MOFA's website and video-sharing platforms.³

(Reference) Number of applications for assistance received by MOFA based on the Implementation Act of the Hague Convention (as of the end of December 2023)

	Application for assistance in child's return	Application for assistance in visitation or contact with child
Applications related to child located in Japan	203	139
Applications related to child located overseas	168	46

3 See the MOFA website concerning the 1980 Hague Convention and Japan's efforts: https://www.mofa.go.jp/tp/hr_ha/page22e_000249.html



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 Foreign Minister and the Press Secretary, while extraordinary press conferences are held as necessary. Press conferences by the Foreign Minister with simultaneous English interpretations 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 from visiting countries/regions via multiple means, including the Internet, so that people can promptly follow and understand the purposes 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



Press Conference by Foreign Minister Kamikawa (September 14, Tokyo)

Minister and State Ministers for Foreign Affairs explain the Government's foreign policies directly to the public through appearances on various media and interviews.

Dissemination of Information through Press Conferences

Minister for Foreign Affairs	117 times
Press Secretary	32 times
Total	149 times

(From January 1 to December 31, 2023)

Dissemination of Information through Documents

Statements by the Minister for Foreign Affairs	21 times
Statements by the Press Secretary	28 times
Press releases by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2,328 times
Total	2,377 times

(From January 1 to December 31, 2023)

(3) Information Provision to the Public Through the Internet

MOFA's website (in Japanese and English) promptly provides 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 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," "MOFA for Kids," and so on. In particular, "MOFA for Kids" publishes contents

for children such as videos and quizzes to explain MOFA's activities in an easy-to-understand way, and Q&A corners explaining vocabulary and international issues that are covered frequently in the news and newspapers. In May, the content for children regarding the G7 Hiroshima Summit was created and published in "MOFA for Kids."

In addition to the above, MOFA provides a variety of information through various social media platforms. In 2023, MOFA actively provided information about topics such as the G7 Hiroshima Summit and related meetings, the situation in Ukraine, the situation in the Gaza Strip, and ALPS treated water.



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



MOFA for Kids



MOFA's official X account: https://x.com/MofaJapan_en

MOFA's official website



MOFA's official X account



MOFA's official Facebook account



MOFA's official Instagram account



(4) Dialogue with Japanese Nationals

With the notion of “Public Relations through Dialogue with the People,” MOFA promotes direct dialogue between the people and the Foreign Minister, the State Ministers for Foreign Affairs, the Parliamentary Vice-Ministers for Foreign Affairs and MOFA officials.

Foreign Minister Hayashi, along with State Minister for Foreign Affairs TAKEI Shunsuke, held roundtable dialogues in February with people active in Okayama, in Akita in June, and in Nagano in August. These lively exchanges of opinions about Japan’s diplomatic policies and the appeal of each region were undertaken as a part of the “Local to Global” Project that aims to promote the attractiveness of regional areas of Japan worldwide.

A MOFA seminar, “Dialogue with Students,” was held for university students in February. At the event, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs YOSHIKAWA Yuumi gave an opening address, and Foreign Ministry’s officials were engaged in discussions with a large number of participating students during the lectures on topics such as the G7 Hiroshima Summit. In addition, MOFA held another seminar

at Osaka University in November, at which Foreign Ministry’s officials were engaged in lively discussions with many participating students (particularly from the Kansai region) during the lectures on topics such as Japan and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In May, MOFA held an open class about the G7 Hiroshima Summit at Sophia University, at which around 500 university students and others participated. The participants provided a wide range of questions, sparking lively discussions with the speakers. At the “Children’s Kasumigaseki Tour Day” held in August, MOFA ran a variety of programs including talks and workshops to deepen understanding about MOFA’s work and countries around the world.

Various programs in which MOFA sends its officials to venues such as local government offices, international exchange organizations, universities and high schools throughout Japan were conducted both online and in person at the request of the participating organizations. These included “Lectures on the International Situations,” “Diplomatic Talks,” “Talks for High School,” and “Visits by elementary, junior and senior high school



“Open class: Turbulent Times and the G7 Hiroshima Summit” (May 13, Sophia University)



“Dialogue with Students” breakout discussion group (November 6, Osaka University)



Kids listening intently during “Children’s Kasumigaseki Tour Day” (August 2, MOFA)



“International Issues Presentation Contest” (November 11, MOFA)



Periodical journal "Diplomacy"

students to MOFA." In addition, MOFA hosted the 2023 "International Issues Presentation Contest" on the theme of future relations between Japan and ASEAN. Open not only to Japanese university students, but also to students from ASEAN nations, it was held in person as well as broadcast online. Through these programs, MOFA promotes 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 "ODA Delivery Lectures" on Japan's ODA policies and specific measures to numerous schools via online. Additionally, MOFA publishes the periodical journal "Diplomacy," widely sharing information on international affairs relevant to Japan and discussions on diplomacy taking place in various areas at various levels. In 2023, the journal took up a range of diplomatic challenges as themes that offered an overview of the current international situation. In addition to discussion related to the G7 Hiroshima Summit, it examined Russia's aggression against Ukraine as well as the conflict between Israel and Palestinian militants and their impact on the region and the world from multifaceted viewpoints. The journal featured a large number of essays and other articles from renowned experts both inside and outside Japan.

Moreover, MOFA also produced various pamphlets and videos aimed at a broad readership in order to promote a deeper understanding on the organizations of MOFA and Japan's diplomacy, such as the G7 Hiroshima Summit. 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 in the declassification of diplomatic records and 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 2010, stipulate: (a) the declassification of diplomatic documents created or obtained more than 30 years ago in principle, and (b) 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 38,000 by the end of 2023.

Furthermore, MOFA discloses information pursuant to the Act on Access to Information Held by Administrative Organs, while giving consideration to national security, the relationship of mutual trust with other countries, the impact on diplomatic negotiations, and the protection of personal information. In 2023, MOFA received 826 requests for disclosure, and documents totaling 121,057 pages were disclosed.

2 Strengthening the Foreign Policy Implementation Structure

Japan is facing the most severe and complex security environment in the post-war era. To promote diplomatic power for maintaining and developing an international order based on universal values, it is vital to fundamentally strengthen the foreign policy implementation structure. To that end, MOFA is working on strengthening its diplomatic missions overseas in both

the aspects of quantity and quality, as well as advancing efforts to improve the organizational and personnel systems at MOFA itself.

Diplomatic missions overseas, such as embassies and consulates-general, not only represent Japan and engage in diplomatic activities, but also play a key role in areas such as information-gathering and strategic external communication at the frontline of diplomacy. At the same time, diplomatic 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.

Given this environment, in January 2024 Japan established an embassy in Seychelles as well as a Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organizations in Rome, Italy (independent office).

Seychelles is located along sea lanes that are important to the security and economy of the Indo-Pacific region, making it an important country for the realization of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).” Furthermore, it is positioned along a maritime route that connects Mombasa Port in Kenya, East Africa’s largest commercial port, which Japan is helping to develop, the Port of Nacala in Mozambique, and Toamasina Port in Madagascar with Japan, and has rich fishery resources. Seychelles also supports Japan in areas such as important international elections. Hence, establishing an embassy in Seychelles is important not only for continuing to maintain and strengthen the friendly bilateral relations between the two countries, but also for strengthening systems to further enhance effectiveness in collecting various types of information, such as in the maritime security field, and providing various forms of support in emergencies.

Rome is the base of international organizations working in the areas of food and agriculture, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). These three international organizations work in close cooperation with one another to secure global food security and reduce the number

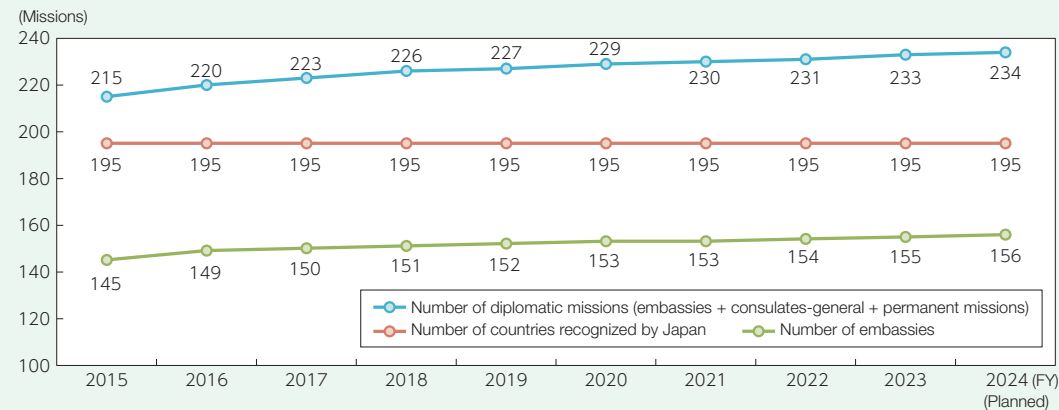
of hungry people, through initiatives to stabilize the global food markets and particularly by providing food support to countries vulnerable to factors that destabilize the food market and improving the production and distribution of agricultural produce. Amidst rising food prices due to the impact of disruptions in the food supply chain as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, destabilization of grain supply due to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, and other factors, it is vital for Japan, in advancing its diplomacy, to secure Japan’s food security and help to stabilize the global food market, including facilitating access to food by countries that are particularly vulnerable to the impact of such factors. It is becoming increasingly important to cooperate with the three organizations in Rome that work to address food and agriculture issues, and establishing a Permanent Mission of Japan is important in contributing toward strengthening Japan’s presence and to the development of systems for cooperation and forming close networks with the three organizations.

In addition to establishing more diplomatic missions overseas, it is important to secure and increase the number of staff members to support diplomacy at the MOFA headquarters and diplomatic missions overseas. In the context of the current severe budget and staff situation for the Government overall, the number of staff members at MOFA was increased in FY2023 by 100 to 6,604 from FY2022 in order to address bilateral relations and regional situations, promote economic security, contribute to addressing global issues, and implement protection and safety measures for Japanese nationals abroad. The number of staff members, 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 diplomatic and consular implementation structure remains essential in FY2024, MOFA will increase its workforce by 70¹ staff.

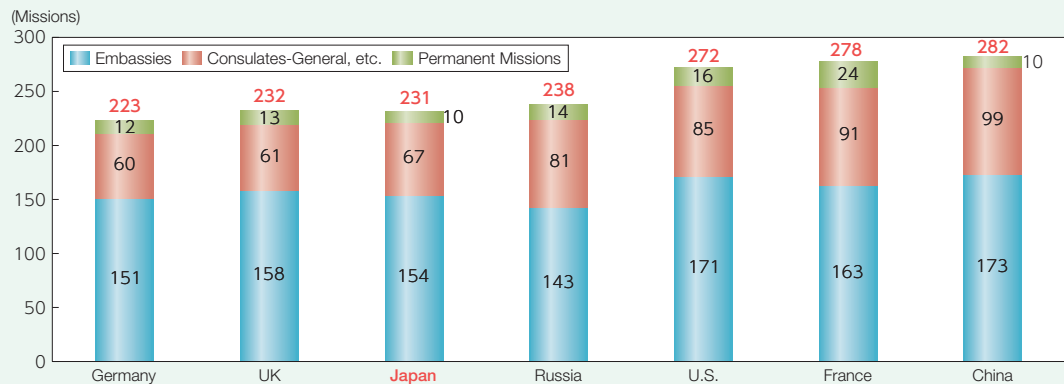
In order to maintain and strengthen an international order based on universal values in an era of competition among nations, MOFA appropriated 756.0 billion yen in the budget for FY2023 (including costs for holding the G7 Hiroshima Summit, of which 12.5

¹ Includes special provision (for one year only) for six additional new recruits in accordance with the increase in the compulsory retirement age.

Changes in the Number of Diplomatic Missions

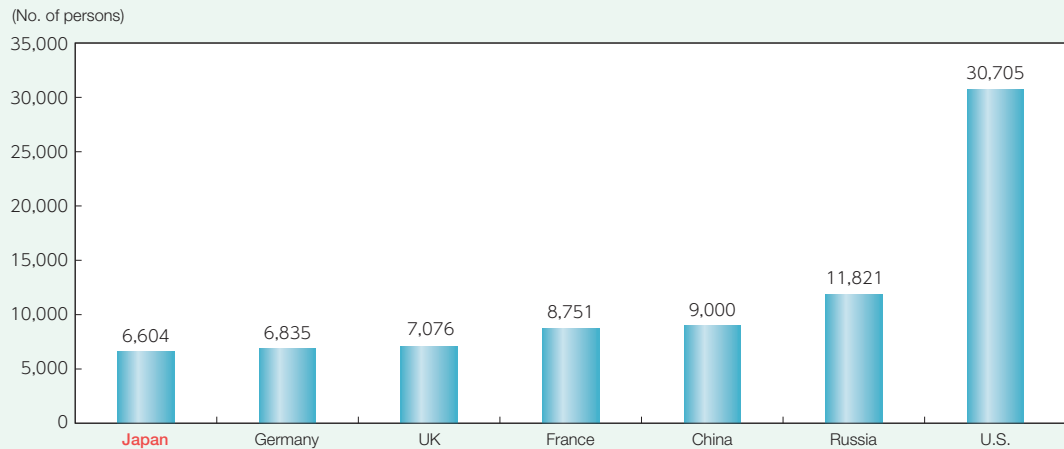


Comparison of the Number of Diplomatic Missions of Japan with Major Countries (P5 + Germany)



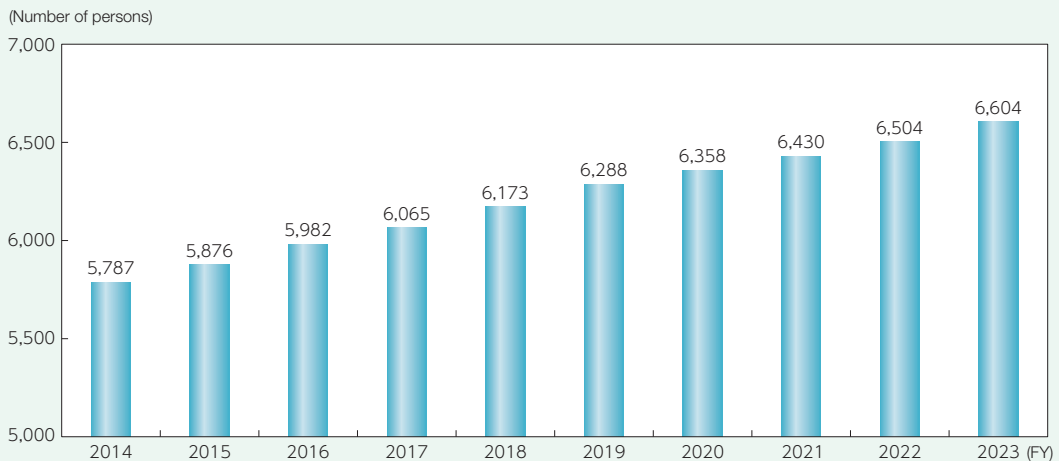
Note: As of January 2023
Average number of diplomatic missions among these seven countries: Approximately 251

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



Note: based on the FY2023 survey result, etc.

Number of Staff Members at MOFA



billion yen is appropriated in the budget of the Digital Agency). Furthermore, MOFA appropriated 270.1 billion yen in the supplementary budget for FY2023 (of which 4.36 billion yen is appropriated in the Digital Agency budget). The funding appropriated in the supplementary budget was, in order to achieve a peaceful and stable international community that ensures that human dignity is preserved, for measures engaging in flexible and firm diplomacy, principally for pressing issues such as support for Ukraine, support for the Global South (emerging and developing countries) and for initiatives to realize FOIP. Funding was also appropriated for measures to respond to high prices.

MOFA's FY2024 initial government budget proposal appropriated 741.7 billion yen (of which 16.0 billion yen is appropriated in the Digital Agency budget) based on the following priorities: (a) implementing the National Security Strategy, (b) strengthening the framework for protection of and risk management for Japanese nationals overseas, and (c) promoting Japan's economic growth. This includes budgets to work with allies and like-minded countries, to implement new plans for FOIP, to strengthen support for Ukraine and countries affected by the situation in Ukraine, to respond to the situation in Israel and Palestine, for Official Security Assistance (OSA), to fundamentally reinforce MOFA's information capabilities including countering disinformation, to enhance the resilience of Japan's diplomatic missions overseas, and to strengthen support for overseas expansion of Japanese companies.

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 The Roles of Think Tanks and Experts in Diplomacy

The roles of think tanks and experts in diplomacy include promoting public understanding of diplomatic and security issues in a way that is not constrained by official government views, making intellectual contributions that produce ideas for diplomatic and security policies, building global intellectual networks, and communicating Japan's perspectives to other countries. Seminars and news commentaries for the general public by think tanks and experts are essential for improving public understanding of diplomatic and security issues as well as the government's standpoint, and gaining public understanding can further enhance the effectiveness of the government's diplomatic activities. Moreover, gathering information, conducting analyses, and making policy recommendations by leveraging expertise and viewpoints that are different from the ones of the government also enrich discussions on diplomatic policies within the government. Global intellectual exchanges are also important in the sense that they promote understanding of Japan among various countries and regions, and contribute to shaping public opinions in the international community. With

the growing complexity and uncertainty in the international community, the roles of think tanks and experts in diplomacy are becoming increasingly important.

Against this backdrop, MOFA provides subsidies to support Japanese think tanks' research activities in the field of foreign and security policy, in order to strengthen their capabilities to collect, analyze and disseminate information, to make policy proposals, and to further promote Japan's comprehensive diplomacy. In FY2023, the scheme provided support to 13 projects under seven organizations, and it is effectively promoting policy proposals to policymakers that are in line with the ever-changing diplomatic and security environment, exchanges of opinions with overseas think tanks and experts, the publication of papers and dissertations activities by experts, and communications with the media. Furthermore, MOFA launched a new subsidy scheme in FY2017 that aims at supporting research and information dissemination activities

of Japanese think tanks in the areas of territory, sovereignty and history. Under the scheme, the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA)² conducts such activities as the collection, organization, and public release of materials found in Japan and overseas, as well as the convention of open symposiums in Japan and in other countries in cooperation with overseas think tanks. Through this scheme, webinars were conducted in 2023, using old maps and archival materials to explain the historical grounds relating to Japan's territorial sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands. In addition, old maps which appear to denote "Takeshima" on official maps for the first time after their incorporation into Shimane Prefecture were discovered and made available to the public. 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.

² Refer to the website of The Japan Institute of International Affairs:
<https://www.jiia.or.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 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.

● IURA Aimi, Executive Chef for the Ambassador at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations

My first executive chef role was at the Embassy of Japan in Iceland, and then the Consulate-General of Japan in Denver, before taking up my current position at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN in New York in December 2022.

Embassies typically focus their work on bilateral relations, and consulates-general are frequently engaged in relations with Japanese nationals and private-sector businesses. However, the Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN works with people from countries all over the world, which means our lunch or dinner guests are also very diverse. In addition, the official residence is within sight of the UN Headquarters, granting me unique opportunities that I would be unlikely to experience while living in Japan. For example, during the UN General Assembly in September, cars carrying presidents and other global heads of state were driving right past the official residence.

The Permanent Mission of Japan hosts many dinners and large-scale receptions. However, other countries' missions actively do the same, and New York also offers a wide variety of restaurants. Under such circumstances, I am always conscious of providing Japanese cuisine which will create unforgettable memories for our guests. Many of them were already interested in Japan but had never tried distinctive regional specialties such as “*dobinmushi*,” a dish where ingredients are steam-boiled in an earthenware teapot, and “*hobayaki*,” a dish where ingredients are grilled on magnolia leaves with miso. I also pay careful attention to the presentation of my dishes. In addition, I create menus so that dishes I have served before do not become repetitive. I put a lot of thought in so that our guests will make new discoveries and become further interested in Japan.

In drawing up a menu, I need to take into account guests' dietary restrictions (such as vegetarians and vegans) and religious practices. When each guest has different needs, putting it all together is like a complex puzzle, but managing to create a menu concept which satisfies all the guests is also very enjoyable and motivating.

Unlike restaurant work, one of the attractions of executive chef work is doing all the ingredient management, menu creation, ingredient sourcing, preparation, cooking, and plating up by yourself. As inflation drives prices higher, I am continuously finding new and innovative ways to present the best possible cuisine within budget. New York is a cutting-edge food city, which fortunately means you can get ingredients from all over the world and make any arrangement that comes to mind. I am glad to say that doing so brings happiness to our guests.



Providing cooking demonstrations at a reception while serving meals (the author is on the left)

Executive chefs can only succeed at their work with the support of everyone around them. I am very grateful to the staff of the Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN, to everyone who helped and gave me advice, and also to my family.

I am so grateful for the valuable opportunities I can experience by living in such an environment, and with this in mind, I am honored to continue my work at the forefront of Japanese diplomacy.



Paying careful attention to the coloring and arrangement of seasonal autumn appetizers



Handmade desserts with just the right amount of sweetness to suit guests' tastes

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 X).

Facebook:

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



X:

https://twitter.com/mofa_japan_chef



Reviving Official Residences for Japanese Ambassador, Key Platforms for Diplomacy: the Work of Technical Officials of the Building and Property Management Section

Were you aware of the roles at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 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 KUWABARA Izumi, a technical official of the building and property management section, who was responsible for refurbishment work at the official residence for Japanese Ambassador to the Republic of Korea (ROK). She describes the work that technical officials do.

● First large-scale refurbishment work since construction

The official residence for Japanese Ambassador to the ROK, designed by a Japanese architect, was built in the early 1970s. As 50 years passed, much of the electrical and mechanical equipment used since the construction had reached the expected lifetime, and a complete replacement was necessary. Therefore, we fully refurbished the equipment and fittings, and made other upgrades such as remodeling the interior and enhancing the building’s accessibility, which took around one year.

As the first large-scale refurbishment since the construction, we started by stripping the building back to its frame, keeping only the base structure and removing almost all interior and exterior linings, finishing, and equipment. The wall, ceiling panels and fittings were removed, and the original concrete frame was exposed. Even though it used techniques over half a century old, I was stunned at how beautifully the concrete had been poured. The construction team at the time must have worked so carefully together to create this building, and we must treasure it and pass it on to future generations. That was encouraging and made us straighten up.



Exterior of the revived official residence

● An official residence which embodies and expresses a distinctively Japanese aesthetic

This refurbishment work aimed to deliver an official residence – key platforms for Japan’s diplomatic activities - which embodies and expresses a distinctively Japanese aesthetic throughout. It therefore features Japanese products including woven carpets and wall coverings of woven fabric, with some of the finishing timber being Japanese zelkova. Furthermore, we used the Oya stone, mined in Tochigi Prefecture, in places to make spatial accents. In addition, the building’s design before the refurbishment incorporated *shoji* (sliding paper screens), which we retained as a traditional Japanese element, even reusing some of the screens. I found it difficult to embrace the distinctively Japanese aspects in building work overseas, in terms of design and construction, but doing so is in fact the true essence and fascination of a technical official’s work.

● Work at construction sites and a technical official’s motivations

During the year of the construction work, I spent almost every day at the site office to help bring the building we aimed for to reality. I was involved in most aspects of the project, including discussions and managing the process with the construction team, checking the drawings, contract procedures, and design changes. This was my first time actually being involved in on-site work, but thanks to the advice and support of highly knowledgeable and experienced veteran technical officials, I was able to appreciate the freshness and joy of this role. It provided a lot of motivation to fully engage in my work. I also felt that the experience of working together with the Embassy’s local staff, as well as Korean architects and construction companies, became a major asset for me. Throughout the refurbishment, we encountered unexpected issues that led to intense discussions. However, despite differences in culture and customs, we all shared the same passions and goals: to complete a better building. This shared commitment was truly heartening and made the joy of finishing it even more significant.

For the first large-scale reception after the refurbishment, we invited people involved from many countries to the official residence. Being personally present with it in use as a key platform for Japan's diplomacy gave me a renewed sense of achievement, and I was filled with the joy of having worked on it as a technical official. I hope to continue working on this job involving buildings that are platforms for Japan's diplomacy.



Official residence entrance hall (Left: during refurbishment Right: after refurbishment)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs recruits technical officials from candidates who have passed the National Civil Service Examination for General Service (University Graduate Level), Technical Categories (Examination Categories: Architecture, Digital/Electrical/Electronics, Machinery). If you are interested, please visit the technical staff recruitment website at the following web address.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "National Civil Service Examination for General Service (University Graduates, Technical): Technical Official Work"

https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/ms/prs/page23_003447.html



References

A large, detailed, grayscale illustration of a peony flower dominates the background. The petals are layered and textured, with some areas appearing more saturated than others, creating a sense of depth. The flower is positioned in the lower right quadrant, with its branches and leaves extending towards the bottom left.

The Issue of Comfort Women

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**The Issue of Former Civilian Workers
from the Korean Peninsula (CWKs)**

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The Issue of Comfort Women

Announcement by Foreign Ministers of Japan and the Republic of Korea at the Joint Press Occasion (December 28, 2015)



https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/na/kr/page4e_000365.html
(Scan here for publications on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website)

1. Foreign Minister Kishida

The Government of Japan and the Government of the Republic of Korea (ROK) have intensively discussed the issue of comfort women between Japan and the ROK at bilateral meetings including the Director General consultations. Based on the result of such discussions, I, on behalf of the Government of Japan, state the following:

(1) The issue of comfort women, with an involvement of the Japanese military authorities at that time, was a grave affront to the honor and dignity of large numbers of women, and the Government of Japan is painfully aware of responsibilities from this perspective.

As Prime Minister of Japan, Prime Minister Abe expresses anew his most sincere apologies and remorse to all the women who underwent immeasurable and painful experiences and suffered incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women.

(2) The Government of Japan has been sincerely dealing with this issue. Building on such experience, the Government of Japan will now take measures to heal psychological wounds of all former comfort women through its budget. To be more specific, it has been decided that the Government of the ROK establish a foundation for the purpose of providing support for the former comfort women, that its funds be contributed by the Government of Japan as a one-time contribution through its budget, and that projects for recovering the honor and dignity and healing the psychological wounds of all former comfort women be carried out under the cooperation between the Government of Japan and the Government of the ROK.

(3) While stating the above, the Government of Japan confirms that this issue is resolved finally and irreversibly with this announcement, on the premise that the Government will steadily implement the measures specified in (2) above.

In addition, together with the Government of the

ROK, the Government of Japan will refrain from accusing or criticizing each other regarding this issue in the international community, including at the United Nations.

2. Foreign Minister Yun

The Government of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Government of Japan have intensively discussed the issue of comfort women between the ROK and Japan at bilateral meetings including the Director-General consultations. Based on the result of such discussions, I, on behalf of the Government of the ROK, state the following:

(1) The Government of the ROK values the GOJ's announcement and efforts made by the Government of Japan in the lead-up to the issuance of the announcement and confirms, together with the GOJ, that the issue is resolved finally and irreversibly with this announcement, on the premise that the Government of Japan will steadily implement the measures specified in 1. (2) above. The Government of the ROK will cooperate in the implementation of the Government of Japan's measures.

(2) The Government of the ROK acknowledges the fact that the Government of Japan is concerned about the statue built in front of the Embassy of Japan in Seoul from the viewpoint of preventing any disturbance of the peace of the mission or impairment of its dignity, and will strive to solve this issue in an appropriate manner through taking measures such as consulting with related organizations about possible ways of addressing this issue.

(3) The Government of the ROK, together with the Government of Japan, will refrain from accusing or criticizing each other regarding this issue in the international community, including at the United Nations, on the premise that the Government of Japan will steadily implement the measures it announced.

Regarding the Judgment of the Seoul High Court of the Republic of Korea in the Lawsuit Filed by Former Comfort Women and Others (Statement by Foreign Minister KAMIKAWA Yoko) (November 23, 2023)



https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press1e_000489.html
(Scan here for publications on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website)

1. In the lawsuit filed by former comfort women and others against the Government of Japan, on November 23, 2023, the Seoul High Court of the Republic of Korea rendered a judgment which ordered the Government of Japan, inter alia, to pay compensation to the plaintiffs, denying the application of the principle of State immunity under international law, as was the case in the judgment of the Seoul Central District Court of the Republic of Korea on January 8, 2021.
2. This judgment, same as the previous judgment on January 8, 2021, is, clearly contrary to international law and agreements between the two countries, and therefore extremely regrettable and absolutely unacceptable.
3. Japan once again strongly urges the Republic of Korea to immediately take appropriate measures to remedy the status of its breaches of international law on its own responsibility as a country.

(Reference 1) Agreement on the Settlement of Problem Concerning Property and Claims and on the Economic Co-operation between Japan and the Republic of Korea (entered into force on December 18, 1965)

Article II

1. The Contracting Parties confirm that problem concerning property, rights and interests of the two Contracting Parties and their nationals (including juridical persons) and concerning claims between the Contracting Parties and their nationals, including those provided for in Article IV, paragraph (a) of the Treaty of Peace with Japan signed at the city of San Francisco on September 8, 1951, is settled completely and finally.

...

3. Subject to the provisions of paragraph 2, no contention shall be made with respect to the measures on property, rights and interests of either Contracting Party and its nationals which are within the jurisdiction of the other Contracting Party on the date of the signing of the present Agreement, or with respect to any claims of either Contracting Party and its nationals against the other Contracting Party and its nationals arising from the causes which occurred on or before the said date.



(Reference 2) Announcement by Foreign Ministers of Japan and the Republic of Korea at the Joint Press Occasion
https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/na/kr/page4e_000364.html



(Reference 3) Japan's Efforts on the Issue of Comfort Women (PDF)
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/100648597.pdf>



(Reference 4) Regarding the Confirmation of the Judgment of the Seoul Central District Court of the Republic of Korea in the Lawsuit Filed by Former Comfort Women and Others (Statement by Foreign Minister MOTEGI Toshimitsu)
https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/danwa/press6e_000269.html

Please see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website for other related documents.
https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/page22e_000883.html



The Issue of Former Civilian Workers from the Korean Peninsula (CWKs)

Regarding the Decision by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Korea, Confirming the Existing Judgments on the Japanese Company

(Statement by Foreign Minister KONO Taro) (October 30, 2018)



https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_002204.html
(Scan here for publications on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website)

1. Japan and the Republic of Korea have built a close, friendly and cooperative relationship based on the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea and other relevant agreements that the two countries concluded when they normalized their relationship in 1965. The Agreement on the Settlement of Problem concerning Property and Claims and on the Economic Co-operation between Japan and the Republic of Korea (the “Agreement”), which is the core of these agreements, stipulates that Japan shall supply to the Republic of Korea 300 million USD in grants and extend loans up to 200 million USD (Article I), and that problems concerning property, rights and interests of the two Contracting Parties and their nationals (including juridical persons) as well as concerning claims between the Contracting Parties and their nationals are “settled completely and finally,” and no contention shall be made thereof (Article II). As such, the Agreement has provided the basis for the bilateral relationship up until now.
2. In spite of the above, today on October 30, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Korea decided to confirm the previously existing Korean judgments as final, which ordered Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corporation, inter alia, to pay compensation

to the plaintiffs. This decision is extremely regrettable and totally unacceptable. This decision clearly violates Article II of the Agreement and inflicts unjustifiable damages and costs on the said Japanese company. Above all, the decision completely overthrows the legal foundation of the friendly and cooperative relationship that Japan and the Republic of Korea have developed since the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1965.

3. Japan once again conveys to the Republic of Korea its position as elaborated above, and strongly demands that the Republic of Korea take appropriate measures, including immediate actions to remedy such breach of international law.
4. Furthermore, if appropriate measures are not taken immediately, Japan will examine all possible options, including international adjudication, and take resolute actions accordingly from the standpoint of, inter alia, protecting the legitimate business activities by Japanese companies. As part of such effort, in order for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to fully address this matter, today, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has established the Division for Issues Related to Claims between Japan and the Republic of Korea in the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau.

Foreign Minister HAYASHI Yoshimasa's comment on the Government of the Republic of Korea's announcement regarding the issue of former Civilian Workers from the Korean Peninsula (CWKs) (March 6, 2023)



https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/na/kr/page1e_000579.html
(See here for related information on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website)

Today, the Government of the Republic of Korea made an announcement regarding the issue of former Civilian Workers from the Korean Peninsula (CWKs).

The Government of Japan is of the view that it is necessary to advance Japan-ROK relations further, based on the platform on which our friendly and cooperative bilateral relations have been built since the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1965, and that the issue of former civilian workers needs to be resolved to that end. Based on this recognition, the Government of Japan has been communicating closely with the ROK government since the inauguration of the YOON Suk Yeol administration. The Government of Japan values the measures announced today by the ROK government, as a move towards restoring Japan-ROK relations, which had been severely strained due to the ROK Supreme Court ruling in 2018, to a sound footing.

Japan and the ROK are important neighbors for one another and we should work together in dealing with various issues of the international community. Ever since the inauguration of the YOON administration,

the two governments have been in close contact with each other, including at the leaders' level. In light of the current strategic environment, the Government of Japan will enhance Japan-ROK and Japan-ROK-U.S. coordination, including in the area of security. Japan will also work in cooperation with the ROK in pursuit of a free and open Indo-Pacific.


Taking this opportunity, the Government of Japan confirms that it upholds in its entirety the positions of the previous Cabinets on history, including the "Japan-ROK Joint Statement" issued in October 1998. The Government of Japan will continue to work closely with the ROK to further advance sound Japan-ROK relations, based on the platform on which the friendly and cooperative bilateral relations have been built since the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1965.

After today's announcement, the Government of Japan hopes to see a robust expansion of political, economic and cultural exchanges between our two countries, together with the implementation of the announced measures.

See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website for other related materials.

https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/na/kr/page4e_000947.html





DIPLOMATIC BLUEBOOK 2024

<https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/index.html>